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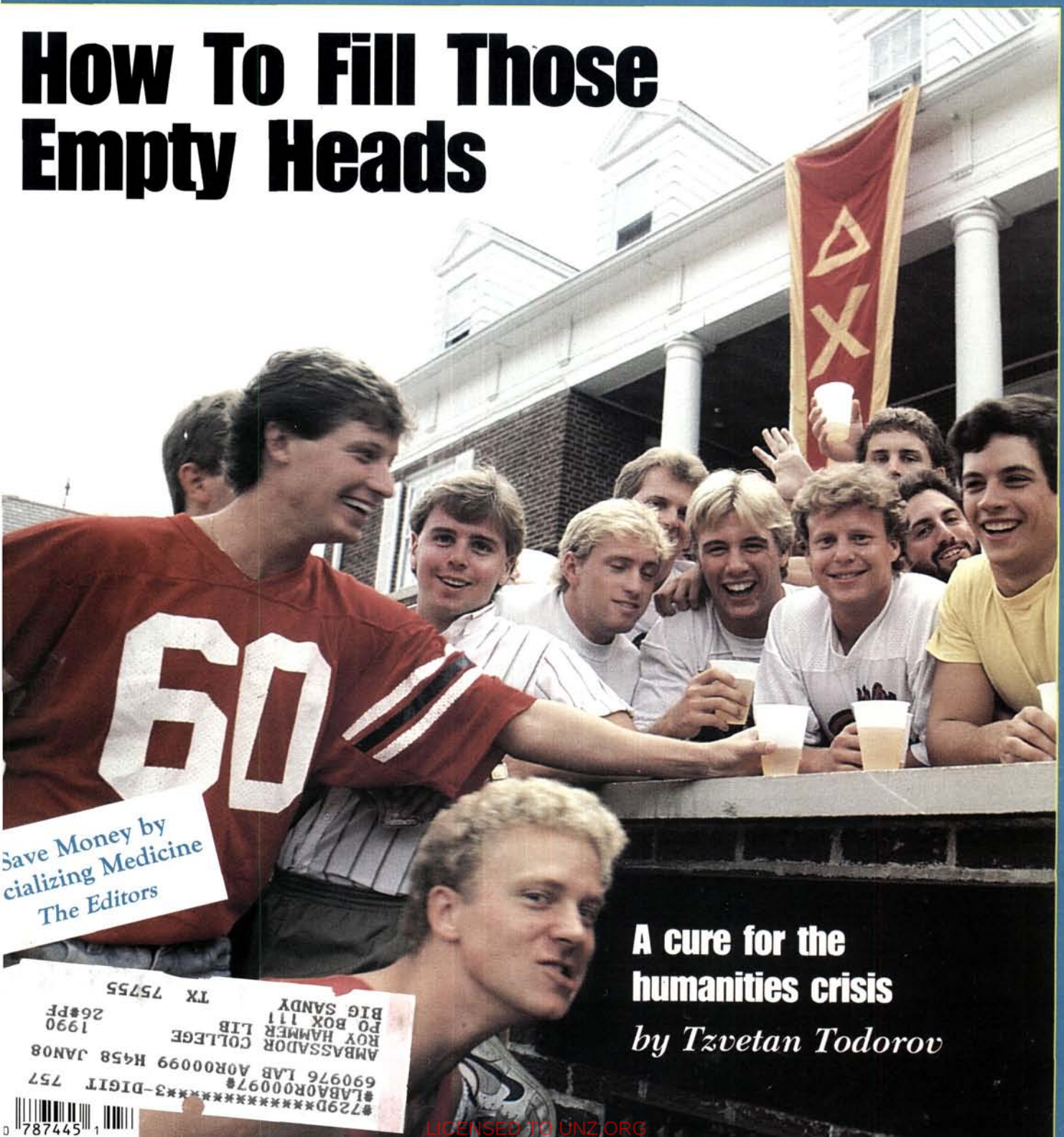
How To Fill Those Empty Heads



Save Money by cializing Medicine
The Editors

A cure for the humanities crisis
by Tzvetan Todorov

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CORRESPONDENCE

Appalachian Trail Blazers

To the editors:

Thomas Geoghegan's conversation with his friend V., the labor lawyer, must have taken place many months ago ("Glory Days," May 29). A crucial strike against the Pittston Company has been going on in West Virginia and Virginia for some time now, following Pittston's decision to reject a United Mine Workers' contract and to cut off medical benefits to widows, retirees, and the disabled. Union members are standing up for their rights vigorously and courageously. They are using civil disobedience on the picket line, and recently the 2,000th arrest was made when a disabled miner in a wheelchair blocked a scab coal truck. Appalachian coal miners have always been in the forefront of the labor movement, and they may yet prove to be its salvation.

As for the people of eastern Kentucky, who according to Geoghegan "would not even know Reagan is no longer president," they not only know, they refused to vote for his successor, George Bush. It is a shame that Geoghegan marred an otherwise fine article with such a cutting throwaway remark.

DENISE GIARDINA
Durham, North Carolina

Flight Path

To the editors:

Henry Fairlie cites as one outstanding "source of the influence that enables [Frank Lorenzo] to sustain his flimsily collateralized empire" his strategy of "recruiting management and board members from federal regulatory agencies" ("Air Sickness," June 5). The implication is that these were examples of the revolving door, with its familiar opportunities for abuse. Since I was among the government officials listed, I would appreciate the chance to speak about my own case.

Shortly after the 1980 election, by which time I had already resigned my government position, Frank Lorenzo invited me to become a member of the board of directors of a new airline he was forming, New York Air. His intention, he said, was to compete directly with the Eastern Shuttle by offering much lower fares. Having played a role in freeing the airline industry from the comprehensive regulatory restraints on competition, and aware of Lorenzo's strong commitment to low fares, I decided to participate.

Did I then, properly or improperly, try to help New York Air in its dealings with the federal government? I have absolutely no recollection of doing so. First, anyone who thinks that a former adviser to President Carter could have exerted any influence on the Reagan administration is living in a dream world. But second, I admit that I would not have hesitated to try to do so, in the interest of competition. For example, New York Air could not get into the shuttle business without obtaining takeoff and landing slots at Washington National and La Guardia airports—slots that the established airlines had divided up among themselves under grant of immunity from the antitrust laws. Lorenzo succeeded in getting the allotment he needed—how, I do not know. I certainly would have tried to help him break the previous cozy arrangement, if there had been the opportunity to do so.

I soon realized that I was not as good a director of a business enterprise run by other people as (I thought) I was a professor, and eventually I resigned. I remain sensitive to the possibility, however, that that association may have compromised my independence on issues of aviation policy. Once I tried to persuade the National Mediation Service to get out of the way of the negotiations between Eastern and its unions—a position that coincided with Lorenzo's. My only consideration was my belief that the Service, perhaps unwittingly, was jeopardizing Eastern's chances of surviving as an independent competitor in an increasingly concentrated industry. Apart from that one possible instance, I have taken no action and expressed no opinion inconsistent with those I took as chairman of the Civil Aeronautics Board, at a time when my only expectation of future employment was a return to Cornell.

ALFRED E. KAHN
Ithaca, New York

Walker's Temple

To the editors:

I was appalled by the low tenor of James Wolcott's review of *The Temple of My Familiar* by Alice Walker ("Party of Animals," May 29). If you think that Walker has written a book serious enough to warrant a review in your pages, then you should have shown both her and your readers (*all* of them, including blacks, women, and feminists) the courtesy of treating her and her book in a serious, respectful manner, regardless of whether the review was critical in nature. The entire venom-filled text, with its obvious contempt for black culture and its problems, was disrespectful. Further, none of the many excerpts from the book really illustrate much of anything, except perhaps Wolcott's racist tilt. Are book reviews the new medium whereby liberal readers are treated to low-brow bigotry?

CHRISTOPHER TORLAKSON
San Francisco, California

Exxon Marks the Spot

To the editors:

TRB's April 24 column ("That's Oil, Folks") contained inaccurate references to Exxon that could have been avoided if someone had bothered to check. It is not true that the company's chairman, Lawrence Rawl, got rid of all, or even any, of Exxon's oil spill specialists when he took over in early 1987. As we have said a number of times, we have more than 1,000 people worldwide trained in various aspects of oil spill work.

Since 1981, when Exxon employed 180,000 worldwide, our ranks have been reduced to just over 100,000. About half this reduction was the result of divesting ourselves of operations (largely non-oil related) mainly in the United States but also in other parts of the world. Of the rest, most left voluntarily under an attractive early retirement program. Almost all of that reduction took place before Mr. Rawl took office. As a glance at our Annual Report will show, the total number of our employees has dropped by only about 1,000 since then.

JAMES A. MORAKIS
Manager, Public Affairs Operations
Exxon Corporation
New York, New York

TRB replies:

Mr. Morakis is right to correct me. Exxon's current chairman did not, as I mistakenly charged, get rid of all of the company's oil spill specialists when he took over in 1987. It was his immediate predecessor who got rid of them, along with 80,000 other employees.

I missed a tree, but I think I was in the general vicinity of the forest.

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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TRB®
FROM WASHINGTON

Atwatergate

Let's wallow in Atwatergate, shall we?

Now that the initial cycle of defamation, denial, showy indignation, and scapegoating is over, behavioral sink buffs can examine at leisure some of the documents, modified limited hangout alibis, and warm if not smoking guns left behind at the scene of Washington's latest episode of political wilding.

Item: the closet memorandum. It was issued by the Republican National Committee, of which Lee Atwater is the hip-talking, hip-shooting chairman, on the eve of Thomas Foley's election as Speaker of the House. Its title is "Tom Foley: Out of the Liberal Closet." The text details points of agreement between Foley's voting record and that of Barney Frank of Massachusetts.

Item: the initial defense. Atwater said, "I don't think it's that big of a deal." Lesser functionaries insisted that no sexual innuendo was intended. The closet metaphor, they maintained, was purely political: Foley is a liberal who pretends to be a moderate. "The insinuation or statement that this is a sideways smear campaign is absolutely false," said Mark Goodin, the RNC communications director; Barney Frank was chosen as the comparison solely because he is a well-known liberal who used to be president of Americans for Democratic Action (ADA).

To accept these explanations one would have to begin by accepting the dubious theory that Frank is uniquely qualified to represent House liberals, even though he is known for the heterodoxy of his opinions (he recently advised liberals to forget about gun control, for example), and even though the current president of ADA, Ted Weiss of New York, is also a member of the House. More to the point, one would have to believe that the memo's authors were unaware (*a*) that the primary meaning of the phrase "out of the closet" is to denote the public disclosure of previously concealed homosexuality; (*b*) that Frank is a gay person who became nationally famous when he came out of the closet two years ago; or (*c*) that for weeks prior to the release of the memo Foley had been the target of a campaign of scurrilous but unpublished rumors suggesting that he too is gay, and perforce closeted. ("We hear it's little boys," an aide to Newt Gingrich, the House Republican whip, had been going around saying.)

Under these circumstances, for the RNC to put out a memo titled "Tom Foley: Out of the Liberal Closet" and then to deny any overtones of gay-bashing is like putting out a memo titled "Pat Schroeder: That Liberal Time of the Month" and denying any overtones of sexism, or putting out a memo titled "Bill Gray: Liberal in the Woodpile" and denying any overtones of racism. In fact it's worse, because in the case of the closet memo an appeal to mindless bigotry is combined with a groundless imputation of the quality on which the bigotry battens. And the reason for the choice of Frank? "Let's put it this way," he told me. "I don't think I was selected as a result of a regression analysis."

Item: the fallback defense. After Republican outrage began to be heard—Foley is popular with his colleagues in both parties—Atwater telephoned the new Speaker to apologize. The next day indignation against the memo reached a crescendo. Bob Dole, the Senate Republican leader, called it "garbage." The White House put out the word that President Bush thought it was "disgusting." Atwater began saying it had been written and released without his knowledge, though this was not, I am told, the impression he had left in his conversation with Foley. By nightfall Goodin had resigned. The night after that, Bush held a prime-time news conference. He repeated that the memo was disgusting, adding: "But I discussed that matter with Lee Atwater. He looked me right in the eye and said he did not know about it."

The vigor of this investigation speaks for itself.

Item: the June issue of *Esquire*, which has a picture of Lee Atwater with his pants down. They're sweat pants, and he's wearing opaque running shorts, and it's part of a tree-wasting feature on how celebrities put their pants on one leg at a time just like the rest of us, so it's not as tasteless as it sounds. It is, however, as idiotic as it sounds.

Strictly speaking, I suppose, the *Esquire* picture doesn't belong on this list of items, since it has no obvious connection to the closet memo. I include it as a relatively benign sample of Atwater's frat-boy, gross-out sense of humor, which is more often cruel. A famous instance was his crack about Tom Turnipseed, a populist Democratic candidate for Congress in South Carolina in 1980, who as a teenager had undergone electroconvulsive therapy for depression. Turnipseed accused Atwater, no doubt accurately, of engineering a bogus "poll" in which white voters were called and asked if it would change their opinion of Turnipseed to know that he was a member of the NAACP. Atwater didn't bother to deny it. Instead he said he wasn't about to answer charges from someone who had once been "hooked up to jumper cables."

Whatever his role in the closet memo, there's no doubt it's the sort of thing he'd think was funny. After all, when he was managing Bush's campaign last year he thought it was funny to play on racial fears by using the Willie Horton case against Michael Dukakis, and he got many a chuckle out of impugning Dukakis's patriotism with the Pledge of Allegiance "issue."

Even though the backlash turned out to be unexpectedly severe, the fact remains that the memo worked. There is precisely the same amount of evidence that George Bush, Lee Atwater, and Mikhail Gorbachev are gay as that Tom Foley is—i.e., none. But only Foley has had to deny it. Only Foley will spend the rest of his life meeting people who have the thought of it somewhere in the back of their minds. Only Foley will have a paragraph about it in his biography. That is why those Democrats (and Republicans) who have called for Atwater's resignation are right. Damage has been done. A proportionate price should be exacted, not so much for the sake of justice as for the sake of deterrence.

Barney Frank, by the way, knows about deterrence. At a conference of political operatives and reporters at Harvard last weekend, I found surprising unanimity that the decisive factor in squelching the anti-Foley smear campaign had been Frank's threat to name five gay Republicans on Capitol Hill. I'm pretty sure he wouldn't have actually done it. But then, isn't the purpose of possessing nuclear weapons to ensure that they never have to be used?

Frank, like many others, is unhappy about the underlying premise of the closet memo flap: that calling someone gay is ipso facto a smear. "But the reality is that we still have a prejudiced society," he says. "When FDR was being called 'Rosenfeld' and 'Rosenstein,' it wasn't inconsistent with opposition to anti-Semitism for people to point out that he was not in fact Jewish." In any case, Frank has done wonders for the "image" of gay people by facing down the bigots. "The humiliation of the Republicans was total—done in by a Democrat in lavender drawers," wrote one of them, a columnist for the *Washington Times*. Right now Barney Frank is the baddest dude in town, and more power to him.

HENDRIK HERTZBERG

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
JULY 3, 1989

BILL OF HEALTH

The fact that 37 million Americans lack health insurance has been repeated so often that it is losing its power to shock. Complaints about the exorbitant costs of health care have also taken on a rather tired air. But put these two problems together, and you have an attention-getting paradox: America leads the developed world both in the fraction of its resources devoted to medical care and in the fraction of its population whose medical needs go unmet. We spend nearly 12 percent of gross national product tending the sick; no other developed nation spends even ten percent. We leave one in six citizens under age 65 uninsured; all other developed nations leave almost none.

So much for claims that health care can't be guaranteed all citizens without breaking the bank. Indeed, the lesson to be drawn from these numbers is stronger still: universal health insurance is not just compatible with cost containment—it is a *prerequisite* for it. Only after all Americans are assured sound medical coverage will it be possible to hold down medical costs in a morally responsible way.

The reason is that the U.S. system has never been quite as callous as the number of uninsured would suggest. Those who lack insurance are seldom allowed to die for want of care. The physician who treats indigent patients with little or no reimbursement is not yet an extinct species. And hospitals have developed convoluted accounting rules under which they overcharge those with insurance, using the resulting "profits" to cover patients who can't or don't pay their bills.

But this Robin Hood system is breaking down. As medical costs have risen, businesses and governments have become tougher bargainers. Employers have negotiated contracts that pay providers just what it costs to render services to their employees and no more. Medicare payments to hospitals are being set with the same objectives. These measures have slightly restrained health care costs, but they have done so at least partly by cutting into funds for treating the uninsured. And this is virtually inevitable, so long as there *are* uninsured. Only in the context of universal health coverage can further efforts to contain costs be pursued with a clear conscience. And only in that context will such efforts surely reduce costs in the manner intended: by cutting into administrative waste, excessive physicians' salaries, and, in particular, the use of treatments with a high ratio of costs to benefits.

This last category of expenditure, which accounts for a growing portion of American medical costs, has been attacked aggressively in some countries. In Britain, where per capita medical spending is less than 40 percent of that in the United States, truly heroic discipline has been shown; dialysis machines are not generally available to the elderly, and queues for coronary bypass surgery are long. These queues are not the inadvertent result of a non-market medical system, but rather a policy goal in themselves, the result of the

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deliberate constriction of resources. The queues force doctors to forgo bypass operations of questionable benefit, which occur all too often in the United States.

At present, the closest thing to a serious congressional proposal for universal health coverage is a bill sponsored by Senator Edward Kennedy that would make companies provide insurance for their workers. The bill has its heart in the right place, and it represents an improvement over the present situation. But it would leave some Americans, notably some of the unemployed, without guaranteed health care. And this—in addition to being a bad thing in itself—would make aggressive cost containment difficult; prices then, as now, could be forced downward only at the expense of the indigent.

Actually, this system of mandated benefits would have trouble holding down costs even if this hole were plugged—even if Medicaid were extended to cover low-income Americans who don't qualify for it under the present, widely varying state eligibility rules, so that true universality of coverage were approached. Interested though employers are in saving money, they will be hard-pressed to deprive their workers of expensive, wasteful treatments—such as CAT scans that have virtually no chance of turning up a tumor—when the employer down the block doesn't. Imposing this sort of discipline is difficult unless all the leverage resides with a single party, such as the government. That is a primary virtue of a unified system, which would make insurance a perquisite of citizenship, financed by a broad-based, equitably distributed tax. In addition, a unified system would be fairer and probably cheaper to administer than mandated benefits.

A unified insurance system need not deprive physicians of their status as private practitioners or infringe on patients' freedom of choice (though it would, necessarily, take pricing discretion out of the hands of the doctors and place it with the government). The provinces of Canada, for example, let patients choose their doctor, who is reimbursed according to a fee schedule that applies to all physicians.

The ideal of a national unified insurance program would be easier to reach if (*a*) the phrase "socialized medicine" didn't scare so many Americans and (*b*) the current system of employer-provided coverage didn't serve most Americans so well. Many groups have vested interests in this system, which admirably serves 65 percent of the population under age 65. The political, not to mention (short-term) economic, costs of trying to overhaul the system are sizable. For now, the idea is going nowhere.

Given that fact, the Kennedy alternative is tolerable, *so long as* it is combined with a Medicaid expansion and thus brings virtually all Americans under one umbrella or another. It is likely that, if we do soon opt for this hybrid system, it will not last more than 20 or 30 years; eventually, as exotic medical technologies create ever larger gaps between costs and benefits, the need to make hard choices about the allocation of medical resources will steer us toward a unified system. In the meantime, the shortcomings of a hybrid system will be outweighed by the potential for *some* cost cutting, not to mention the benefits to millions of people who now live with inadequate medical care or none at all.

The declining number of opponents of universal medical coverage contend that the problem is much less severe than the 37 million uninsured would indicate. This is in some respects true. To begin with, not all of the uninsured are poor—roughly 5.1 million had incomes exceeding $40,000 in 1986, enough to afford routine, if not major, health care. And not all of the poor are uninsured—2.3 million poor Americans had private health insurance and 7.2 million more were covered by a public program. Still, five million poor people lacked any insurance at all in 1986. And the numbers of uninsured ignore the millions counted as insured whose coverage—including Medicaid, in some states—is pitifully meager.

Congress, rattled by rising costs and a growing population of uninsured, has alternated between ineffectual attempts to control costs and equally fruitless efforts to expand health insurance coverage. Medicaid has been extended to previously unserved groups, but private coverage has eroded even faster, as heavily unionized industries decline and the sparsely unionized service industries rise. The number of uninsured rose by one-third between 1979 and 1986. Congress can keep trying to marginally shrink this number, but until America is willing to spend the seed money to bring the number of uninsured down to zero, the huge savings that would flow from a rational allocation of health care resources will continue to elude us.

NOTEBOOK

YOU HEARD IT HERE FIRST: Some weeks ago it was reported in TNR ("Rocket Man," May 15) that Dan Quayle had "in the Senate . . . once said the United States should develop anti-satellite weapons because we could not have prevailed without them in *Red Storm Rising*." Even seasoned Quayle-bashers, upon reading this passage, found themselves pausing to wonder whether a U.S. senator really would let a novelist's flights of fancy shape his opinions on national policy. But all doubts were dispelled by the June 5 issue of *Newsweek*. Quayle, it turns out, has asked the author of *Red Storm Rising*, Tom Clancy, to work for the National Space Council, which Quayle heads, as an unpaid consultant. TNR has since learned from top administration officials that Clancy was not the first choice for the post; a plan to approach renowned aviator Clutch Cargo for the position was scuttled when it was discovered that Mr. Cargo is not a real person.

AND THE WHINER IS . . . : We briefly considered holding a contest to see which reporter or pundit could most dramatically wring his or her hands over the pros-

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pect of a new ethics hyperconsciousness in Washington. You know the scenario: the fates of John Tower, Jim Wright, etc. will leave the government immobilized, mired in charges, countercharges, and pervasive fear. Unfortunately, before we had a chance to announce the competition, Michael Oreskes of the *New York Times* produced a pre-emptive entry and walked away with the trophy. The lead paragraph of his June 1 front-page story reads: "The House to which Speaker Jim Wright announced today his plan to resign is a House beset with fear, one in which every rumor, every phone call from a reporter, every partisan spat could be the beginning of the end of a career." *Every* phone call from a reporter? Even when the caller is just harmless Michael Oreskes asking you to say something quotably silly like "There's a World War I mentality, an ethics trench warfare" (Representative Leon Panetta) or "There is an evil wind blowing in the halls of Congress today that is reminiscent of the Spanish Inquisition" (Representative Jack Brooks)? Well, let's assume Oreskes, Panetta, and Brooks are right. Let's assume an Inquisition will occupy Congress for the next couple of years. So what? It's not as if Congress had any other plans. The nation's deepest problems—the budget deficit, the underclass—haven't gotten any earnest attention from either house this year. And there is no sign that this will change anytime soon. So why not spend the time productively? Give Congress a long, painful reminder that its allegiance is supposed to lie with the public interest. Maybe even pass some legislation cutting down on the influence of special interest money. Then, by the time the nation's domestic problems become too large to ignore, maybe our legislators will be better equipped to confront them.

HEATH'S CLIFF:

Tories seal peace pact with Heath

—*London Observer*, June 11

Tories plot to dump Heath

—London *Sunday Times*, same day

HATH NOT A CRITIC EYES?

London Loves Dustin Hoffman 'Merchant of Venice'

—*San Francisco Chronicle*, June 3

Hoffman as Shylock: London Critics Cool

—*New York Times*, same day

(thanks to Peter McClintock, San Francisco, California)

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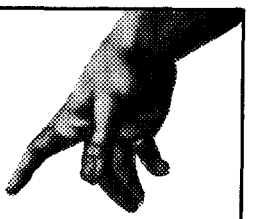

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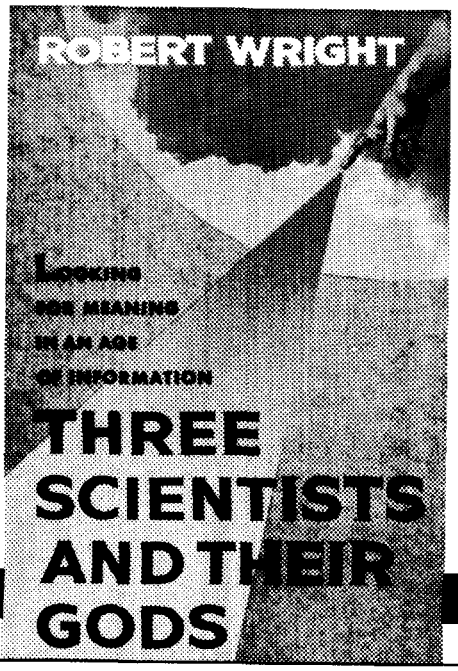

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—Dan Calef, *San Francisco Chronicle*

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—Lee Dembart, *Los Angeles Times*

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—George Johnson, *The New York Times Book Review*

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MISFORTUNE COOKIE: Before the brutal suppression of civil unrest in China consigns the reputation of its Supreme Leader to the Deng heap of history, it seems only fitting to recount one or two of the garlands he has garnered during his lifetime. "I know Deng Xiaoping as well as I know any political leader on earth," said Armand Hammer last July. "No more realistic and pragmatic man is in office in any country." With his usual perspicacity, Hammer noted that "if the authorities in Taiwan will open a window of opportunity, Deng will push China right through it." Hammer's predictive powers are rivaled only by those of Mr. China Card himself. Writing in 1982, Richard Nixon observed that "the most difficult problem for any totalitarian regime is to provide for an orderly, peaceful succession. Mr. Deng has solved this problem in China. Mr. Deng's choices as Communist Party General Secretary, Hu Yaobang, and Prime Minister, Zhao Ziyang, are highly intelligent, strong leaders." Zhao's current plight is clear, and for those who don't remember, Hu Yaobang was stripped of his power before dying earlier this year. "There still are left-wing dissidents within the party hierarchy . . . ," Nixon continues. But "they have been largely stripped of power, dispersed, or otherwise rendered unable to mount an effective challenge." Perhaps the anonymous author of a profile of Deng in *Defense & Foreign Affairs* knew him best: "Deng is said to like to run up stairs two at a time, and enjoys spitting and swimming."

TRUST, BUT VERIFY:

Parties Seeking to Curb Partisan Ethics Warfare

—*Los Angeles Times*, June 3

Republicans Create Unit to Dig Up Any Damaging Data on Democrats

—same paper, same day

(thanks to Steve Treat, Santa Monica, California)

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

By Fred Barnes

Shortly after 7 a.m. on June 8, Lee Atwater showed up at the White House to take his medicine. He didn't have to take much. Atwater, the Republican national chairman, talked a few minutes with John Sununu, the White House chief of staff. Their periodic chats normally cover a lot of issues. This time they concentrated on the memo distributed by the Republican National Committee insinuating that Tom Foley, the new House Speaker, is homosexual. "We talked about nothing else," says Sununu. Atwater desperately wanted to save his job. He was insistent about one thing—that he hadn't dreamed up or even seen the memo before it was mailed to GOP leaders on June 1. Sununu asked if Atwater wanted to repeat this to President Bush face to face. He did. "I took the opportunity to look him right in the eye and say I didn't know about it," says Atwater. Bush blinked.

The encounter in the Oval Office was the next-to-last event in Atwater's week of peril. It led to the last. At his nationally televised press conference that night, Bush disposed of the notion that Atwater should resign. The memo "was disgusting," Bush said. "It's against everything I've ever tried to stand for in political life. But I discussed that matter with Lee Atwater, and he looked me right in the eye and said he did not know about it. He moved promptly to remove the person that did know about it, and so I accept that." Bush expected more questions about Atwater, but he didn't get any. The next day at the White House, Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater briefed reporters for 90 minutes. No one asked about Atwater. He'd survived.

Atwater has China to thank. Distracted by the tumult there, reporters had only a fleeting interest in pursuing him. And I can think of three other reasons why Atwater managed to cling to his job. First, the White House never flinched in its support. Bush may have been disgusted by the memo, but many of his aides were less than outraged. "I read it the day before the story broke, and I didn't think it was so bad," says a White House official. "It was news to me that Foley is so liberal. [That was the ostensible point of the memo.] But the line from the boss is that it's disgusting. So it's disgusting." Sununu said the memo was "not the kind of memo we wanted going out." Still, Atwater "is a great chairman of the RNC. He's making a difference." Firing Atwater was never discussed, says Sununu. "Atwater was not rebuked either," says a White House official. "The memo was, but not Lee."

The second reason for Atwater's survival is that there's no smoking gun. Outside Republican circles, I've found practically no one who believes Atwater's story. But disbelief isn't the same as evidence. The memo, which said Foley was coming "out of the liberal closet," was attributed to Mark Goodin, the RNC's communications director. He resigned, without implicating Atwater. The third reason is that Republicans didn't call for Atwater's resignation. Representative David Nagle, an Iowa Democrat, said he found a number of Republicans who want Atwater to step down. He never produced their names, begging off with the excuse that Foley had asked him to abandon his dump-Atwater effort. House Republican leader Bob

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Michel, who criticized the memo but not Atwater, figured there weren't any Republicans allied with Nagle. At least he didn't know of any. Nor did the White House receive any urgings from Republicans that Atwater go.

According to the Atwater camp's version of events, Atwater not only had nothing to do with the memo, he actually had warned his staff on June 2 against attacking Foley. Atwater gathered RNC officials for what he calls a "pepper drill." He was getting ready for an appearance, later canceled, on a Sunday TV talk show. An aide suggested a line of criticism about Foley and, according to a Republican official, Atwater said no. "Foley's the strongest guy they've got." (Atwater's theory is that you go after weaker, more vulnerable Democrats.) Goodin attended the June 2 meeting, but he didn't inform Atwater about the memo that had been dispatched the day before. The first Atwater heard of the memo, the GOP official said, was late on June 5 when David Rogers of the *Wall Street Journal* called him at home. Atwater was getting a massage at the time. He said the memo sounded fine to him. It wasn't until June 6 that he learned of the "out of the closet" headline on the memo, according to Atwater's version.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

By that time, Sununu had already gotten wind of it. He says he called Atwater for an explanation. "Lee was concerned it went out without his seeing it," says Sununu. He also told Bush, who "was upset about it." Atwater sent a copy of the memo to the White House, and it arrived late in the afternoon. Sununu didn't get a copy to Bush until the next morning. He stopped off in the Oval Office on his way to the senior staff meeting. Bush read the memo, called Atwater, and said he was repelled by it. Atwater gave his alibi about not having known about the memo. Later that morning, with White House assent, Atwater got rid of Goodin.

At Fitzwater's noon briefing on June 7, there were more questions about Atwater and the memo than about China. Fitzwater is a genius at defusing a flap. His tactic is to state what the White House wants to say as succinctly as possible, then not deviate from it. No matter what the question, Fitzwater sticks to his initial answer. This gives reporters fewer quotes to work with in their stories, and nothing that fuels new angles. This is modified stonewalling. Instead of giving no information, Fitzwater gives a little, but no more. "The president is disgusted by this incident," Fitzwater said. "He has spoken to Lee Atwater, who told the president he called the Speaker yesterday to apologize. We consider the matter closed." Reporters tried hard, one asking if Bush wanted "Goodin good and gone." Fitzwater said Bush probably doesn't even know Goodin, who'd been deputy press secretary of Bush's presidential campaign. Sensing this might prompt a story revealing a Bush-Goodin connection, Fitzwater took it back. "I shouldn't have made that assumption," he said.

Bush's goal at his press conference was the same as Fitzwater's: make the story go away. He spent an hour and a half with his staff fielding possible questions. Bush didn't exactly rehearse. Rather, he asked for ideas on how to respond, then jotted down some of the suggestions. At the session with the press, his first on prime-time TV, Bush expected reporters to hector him on his unwillingness to dismiss Atwater. Had they, Bush intended to repeat his first answer. However reporters might couch their questions, "we felt there was one question and one answer," says Sununu.

On Capitol Hill, GOP leader Michel heard about the memo on June 5. He declined to issue a statement about it out of fear he'd make an unsubstantiated rumor about Foley public. On June 6 Representative Barney Frank, a Democrat from Massachusetts, denounced the memo at a press conference and threatened to name five Republicans who, unlike Foley, really are homosexual. At that point, the memo was public and Michel had no choice but to attack it. On

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June 7 Senate Republican leader Bob Dole did the same thing. But neither zinged Atwater. Why not? They seemed to believe his story. Dole knew from his staff that Goodin had turned out press releases on his own when he'd worked for GOP Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina. And the rumor about Foley wasn't new to Republicans. They blamed House Democrats for circulating it in the first place, weeks earlier.

The flap threatened to make a Bush-Foley-Michel-Sununu lunch on June 8 awkward. But it went smoothly. The lunch was held in the study adjacent to the Oval Office. The subject of the memo never came up. This pleased Michel in particular, since he is eager to get along with Foley. He and Jim Wright were not friends or even friendly, and it made doing business difficult. Michel hopes his relationship with Foley will be "1,000 degrees" different. After the lunch, Michel went off for a chat with Sununu. Bush and Foley wandered down the hall to the Oval Office, talking. Though Bush didn't disclose what was said, White House officials assume he apologized to Foley for the memo.

By June 9 Atwater was safe, but still fretting. Rumors sifted back to him that he was losing favor at the White House. When Fitzwater got back to his office late in the afternoon, he found a phone message from Atwater. Before he could return the call, Atwater was on the phone again, slightly frantic. Fitzwater was reassuring. There was no trouble brewing for him at the White House. The flap had peaked. The weekend talk shows were the only thing left for him to endure. Quit worrying, Fitzwater said. You're in good shape. Atwater calmed down in a few minutes and hung up. Then Fitzwater turned and gave me his assessment of Atwater: "He's innovative, he's aggressive, he's going after people. He's given the Republican Party a new face. He made a mistake. The RNC made a mistake. You swallow and go on."

Has Israel's next war arrived?

SLIPPING INTO DARKNESS

By Hirsh Goodman

JERUSALEM

We are either on a bridge or at the brink. If something does not come of the current diplomatic initiative to ameliorate the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, we face a potential crisis of hitherto unknown dimensions.

Eighteen months after the *intifada* began, the rules are clearly changing. Israelis in the occupied territories have formed their own army and openly challenge the authority of the government and the Israel Defense Forces. Palestinian death squads are executing suspected collaborators on the basis of rumor and supposition. Jews throw rocks at Palestinians in Ashdod, Ashkelon, and the outskirts of Jerusalem, and Palestinians have started using lethal weapons in an organized though sporadic way.

Anger and suspicion have become omnipresent, and militants on both sides are ascending. The optimism sparked by the recent Shamir overtures has dissipated. Instead the daily headlines report strident opposition within the prime minister's own party and new peaks in the cycle of violence and counterviolence in the territories. In early June some 30 yeshiva students went on a rampage in the village of Kifl Harith, killing a teenage girl, wounding two other youngsters, and leaving behind them a vindictive trail of violence. The search continued for yet another soldier believed kidnapped and murdered by Islamic fundamentalists. The toll of the *intifada* was over 500, and the 40th Palestinian was executed by Palestinians for allegedly cooperating with the Israelis. A food poisoning incident in a factory canteen in Afula was immediately attributed to Arabs rumored to have been working in the kitchen—"no matter what the police are saying."

A growing cynicism is permeating the public's attitude toward both the Palestinians and the government's ability to cope. Increasingly people simply take events into their own hands. One evening in early May, hundreds of middle-income people from the Jerusalem suburb of Ma'alei Adumim, just six miles from the heart of the capital, went on a rampage against the residents of the Palestinian village of Azariya. Four Israelis had been badly injured when their car overturned after being hit by a stone thrown by a ten-year-old from Azariya. The assailants were no fanatic yeshiva students from the extreme nationalist wing of the Jewish settler movement. Probably many of them vote for the Israel Labor Party. But they run a gauntlet of rocks and stones each time they drive past Azariya, which is adjacent to the Jerusalem-Ma'alei Adumin highway.

Several weeks ago the townsfolk of Ariel, an Israeli town in the West Bank very close to the pre-1967 border whose residents mostly work in the greater Tel Aviv area, enacted a law requiring all Arab workers in the town to wear a tag identifying them as "foreign workers." A few days later the local council of Kiryat Arba near Hebron issued a similar order. The similarity to the yellow Star of David required of Jews by the Nazis was not overlooked, but the cries of outrage against the excesses of the right seem more muted than usual. Politicians and editorial writers mouthed the usual platitudes about the dangers of vigilantism, but their words lacked conviction.

Israelis are tired of international criticism and of explaining themselves to American Jews. They seem to

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realize that the uprising is an existential problem, not a moral-ethical one. Many feel that the corner was turned on April 23, 1989, when Israeli television showed a PLO march through one of the West Bank towns. In perfect military form, row after row of Palestinian youths, uniformly dressed, the slits of their eyes showing through their checkered *kefiyehs*, marched through the streets to the cheers and songs of the amassed crowds. Palestinian flags were on prominent display, as were portraits of Chairman Arafat. This was the new Palestinian army parading before the new Palestinian people. Not the children of the *intifada* throwing rocks in frustration, but a disciplined and widely supported paramilitary force. The enemy in Israel's next war.

The generals and their counterparts in the Defense Ministry were shocked by the footage, and the next day the General Staff initiated a top-level series of consultations on the next step in dealing with the *intifada*. They could not believe that a military parade of massive dimensions had been held under their very noses, and that they had known nothing about it until they saw it on TV. The failure, it was felt, was a direct result of the government's decision to relax security measures in the territories in early April before Shamir's trip to Washington. The army had pulled back almost all of its regular forces, and several hundred Palestinian leaders had been let out of jail. Curfews had been relaxed and an attempt made to open some schools.

Now, just three weeks later, the best front-line units of the IDF were ordered back into the territories, conducting pinpoint raids through West Bank villages in a style reminiscent of Beirut. Hundreds of Hammas (Islamic fundamentalist activists) were arrested, as were the key leaders of the Shabiba, the militant youth arm of the PLO. An unprecedented curfew was imposed on the entire Gaza Strip and its 700,000 inhabitants, and all Gazans working in Israel were ordered home immediately. Some of them had held jobs in Tel Aviv, Ashkelon, and Ashdod for 20 years. Those workers now being allowed back into Israel must have a magnetic-strip identification card. Anyone found guilty of a "security" offense will not be allowed to work in Israel. The same measures may soon be applied to the West Bank.

Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin warned that he was considering even more draconian legislation in the territories, such as rescinding the right of appeal, and the usually liberal chief of staff, Dan Shomron, told a special session of the Israeli Cabinet that he wants to expel any Palestinian apprehended for the same crime (loosely defined as "terrorism") twice.

Many saw the IDF's crackdown as linked to the Shamir initiative, the message being either you go along with our election plan, or we will beat you into submission. But this was not the key factor in its thinking. The IDF had come to recognize that the *intifada* was a war, not a police problem, and that Israel had a new hostile front in addition to its borders with Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan: the home front. Reservations once expressed that deployment of elite units in the territories would "contaminate" the true fighting spirit of these men were set aside in consideration of operational demands. No longer mass lashings out at civilian populations, but surgical treatment for a cancerous problem.

Both Shamir and Rabin admit that there is no military solution to the *intifada*. But what to do about it? It was this dilemma that brought Shamir, Rabin, Moshe Arens, and Shimon Peres to the idea of elections in the West Bank and Gaza—the first consensus diplomatic initiative in Israel's history, and, ironically, a demand put forward by the Uprising Unified Leadership as early as January 1988, just two months into the *intifada*. The PLO has not rejected the concept, and the Egyptians and Jordanians support it in principle. The Americans have adopted it as the cornerstone of their short-term Mideast policy, and the Russians have not opposed the idea.

Elections are the bridge. They are, at present, the only identifiable way to divert Israelis and Palestinians from an inevitable head march into an era where the pace and intensity of events will be dictated by the fringes, not the mainstream. It is already happening.

Shamir, the Knesset, and the Cabinet have agreed that the purpose of the elections is to elect bona fide Palestinian interlocutors with whom Israel can negotiate interim and final agreements. Shamir said these elections would be free, that he would negotiate with whomever is elected, and that he sees elections at the start of a process—not an end in themselves. Although he still insists that he will never negotiate with the PLO, he has in essence recognized that neither Israel, Jordan, Egypt, nor the United States will be able to dictate who represents the Palestinians (as was the assumption when Peres and King Hussein met in London in 1987). As one Labor Knesset member, Avraham Burg, noted: "Elections are a way for Shamir to climb down from his tree of 'never negotiating with the PLO' and maintain his dignity." They are also a way for him to maneuver diplomatically and survive politically—perhaps. The test will come on July 4, when the Likud Central Committee, brought into session by the prime minister's opponents, meets to vote on Shamir's plan.

Three of the Likud's six ministers in the Inner Cabinet (Ariel Sharon, David Levi, and Yitzhak Modai) oppose Shamir, as does his closest foreign policy aide, Yossi Ben Aharon. This opposition has not, as some have claimed, been orchestrated to improve Israel's bargaining position. It is genuine and it is significant. Sharon is not to be taken lightly. Neither is Levi, deputy prime minister and housing minister, who is openly positioning himself to challenge Foreign Minister Moshe Arens for the leadership of the party three years down the line. Sharon, however, has a different agenda.

What Sharon believes is not relevant. His political views flow with the tide of political opportunism. He sees his opportunity in the 25 percent to 30 percent of the Israeli electorate who say "not one inch" and who feel that they are being abandoned by the Likud. By

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galvanizing the nationalistic right wing—currently fragmented in secular, religious, and racist parties—into a vocal and unified whole, Sharon hopes to hold the balance in the Israeli Knesset, replacing the traditional Orthodox bloc. Privately he has said that he probably never will be Israel's prime minister. If he is allowed to develop unchecked, however, he could be the man making the decisions for the prime minister—something he managed to do artfully under Menachem Begin both during the peace process with Egypt and Israel's war in Lebanon.

The Americans took Shamir seriously when he presented his plan to Secretary of State James Baker in early April. They don't expect him to rush in and hand back territory, but they intend to keep him to his word on free elections. The Labor Party has adopted the same strategy, forcing Shamir to bring his initiative to the Knesset for formal approval, thus hoping to prevent any future backtracking by the prime minister or his party.

There are few precedents for the election of representatives to negotiations, or for elections under the bayonet of occupation. Clearly, if the concept is to be translated into diplomacy, some creative thinking must be done. Who can stand? What is bona fide election rhetoric, and what is sedition? Once elected, what powers do those elected have and what restrictions are they subjected to?

Conventional wisdom has it that the PLO will win these elections hands down; that they will organize a slate prior to the election, with the ballot box giving nothing more than formal approval. But unanimity is neither automatic nor assured. There are other forces at play, such as the Hamma movement, which would sweep Gaza and probably some major West Bank towns as well; latent but still active pro-Jordanian groups; and well-organized and armed Rejectionist factions of the PLO who oppose a two-state solution as much as the most extreme factions of the Israeli right wing.

Still, there are election models that could make it all work. There could be no objections from any side if the elections were internationally guaranteed by mutually acceptable parties; if the only restrictions on who could stand were age, residency, and an internationally recognized criminal record; if those elected were guaranteed freedom of travel, so that they could move between Tunis and the territories, and if they were given true powers to negotiate an evolutionary solution leading to a mutually acceptable final settlement.

The modalities have to be agreed upon. For this the United States has its dialogue with the PLO, Egypt has offered itself as a conduit, and Israel has a working team of experts, headed by Arens's senior policy adviser, Sallai Meridor, proposing ideas that will be transmitted to Washington, if Shamir survives on July 4. There are experts in the United States who have organized elections under more complicated circumstances. The real problem is the lack of leadership in getting the process going.

Indeed, we seem to be moving in the wrong direction. In the wake of Baker's statements that Israel will have to speak to the PLO and that the country should abandon its vision of a Greater Israel, Shamir is beginning to slide away from his positions of early April. As internal party criticism mounts, and as the number of terrorist infiltration attempts and attacks increase from Palestinians over Israel's northern border, he will continue to slide to the right. The Palestinians, in the occupied territories and abroad, after first embracing the idea, have begun to attach so many conditions to the process that they too have stepped back. The chasm gets deeper.

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Dick Gephardt, weather vane.

MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

By Morton M. Kondracke

When most of the country last saw Representative Richard Gephardt, in March 1988, his presidential campaign was going down in flames. His theme of "economic nationalism"—a blend of protectionism, Japan (and Korea)-bashing, and economic populism—had won Iowa and South Dakota for him, but cost him financial support in New York and California. What money he had—$1 million—he spread too thinly over several Southern states on Super Tuesday, while Michael Dukakis and Albert Gore shrewdly targeted their funds in areas of strength. Gephardt also suffered from a reputation as a flip-flopper on every issue from abortion to the minimum wage. After a dismal third-place finish in Michigan, he withdrew from the race to seek re-election to Congress, declaring victory in defeat: "We've drawn the decisive battle line of the 1988 election, the economic strength of the nation."

Gephardt now feels vindicated by the results of the 1988 election and by retaliatory trade actions taken by the Bush administration (though he thinks they're not tough enough). He has been saying over and over again in speeches across the country and in Congress that "we are in danger of losing control of our economic destiny," and was preparing to write a book about it to enhance his shot at another presidential bid in 1992. When he delivered the keynote address at the California State Democratic Convention in February, he said that "in the closing weeks of the 1988 cam-

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paign, when the voters at last heard a semblance of this message ('economic strength'), we closed a widening gap. The next time, we have to say it from the beginning."

Gephardt also had settled or paid back practically all of his leftover $2.8 million campaign debt—and in the process had expanded his fund-raising network for 1992. At a meeting of political aides on January 29, he made it clear that he felt money was the main reason he didn't win last year. His finance team assured him that he already had the ability to raise half again what he'd raised in 1988 ($10 million). Gephardt concluded his running would depend upon his prospects for raising a Dukakis-sized war chest of $25 million. In spite of his loss last year, Gephardt had also kept a formidable core of political advisers, including consultants Robert Shrum and David Doak, former Mondale aide Richard Moe, fund-raiser Terry McAuliffe, finance chairman Boyd Lewis, campaign manager Bill Carrick, Missouri adviser Joyce Aboussie, and Iowa coordinator Stan Murphy. He had hired a new chief of staff, Tom O'Donnell, former political director of the House Democratic campaign committee, and had begun raising funds for his political action committee to help friends with their 1990 campaigns.

Now the misfortunes of House colleagues Jim Wright and Tony Coelho have changed his plans. Instead of launching another presidential bid, Gephardt has undergone something of a political rebirth as House majority leader, the third most powerful Democratic post in the country. Because the top two party leaders, Tom Foley and George Mitchell, are conciliatory types, many congressional colleagues expect Gephardt to be the chief activist-organizer on the Hill, the key inventor of strategies to counter President Bush. Republican leaders think he's a worthy adversary, tactically speaking, but they also think he stands for ideas—protectionism and heavy government regulation—that the country doesn't want.

Clearly that's not the way his Democratic colleagues feel. From the moment he announced, he was the runaway favorite for majority leader. As liberal Representative Barney Frank puts it, "He's a good legislator with a non-threatening personality. He's very bright, but not intimidating, no Lyndon Johnson. Some liberals thought he wasn't liberal enough, but the presidential race moved him in our direction. He was a year early on this sophisticated economic nationalist policy, which is the winning theme of the future. And he's the world's longest-standing Eagle Scout, which has come to be the litmus test for advancement these days."

Indeed, Gephardt is a former Eagle Scout and is regarded as squeaky clean on all counts. Rather than resort to honest graft of one sort or another to secure his financial future, Gephardt and his wife sold their close-in suburban Washington home for a healthy profit, bought a cheaper one farther out, and invested the difference ("after paying capital gains at the current and appropriate rate," Gephardt says) for their children's college education.

Besides being clean, Gephardt is also known for his ability to see where political currents are heading. After the 1980 Democratic defeat, he was a leader of various House efforts to develop "new ideas" for liberalism. And after the 1984 defeat, he became the first chairman of the Democratic Leadership Council, a group originally dedicated to building party strength in the South and West. Senator Bill Bradley selected Gephardt to co-sponsor tax reform legislation. Edward Kennedy asked him to co-sponsor health care cost containment legislation and, with Tom Harkin, he co-sponsored market-allocation farm legislation last year—giving him a considerable boost in Iowa.

But questions persist about whether Gephardt truly stands for anything, whether he isn't pandering to fear and loathing of the Japanese, and whether the positions he takes will be good for the Democratic Party. Gephardt and his friends insist that he's proved he is dedicated and serious about the issue of "economic strength"—to the extent of reading all the major books on competitiveness, traveling to Japan, and even taking lessons in Japanese. They say that even though he terms Japan "our greatest economic competitor" and criticizes foreigners' trade practices, he means to compete not just by threatening to keep out foreign products, but by improving American education and urging American industry to make better and cheaper products.

Yet Gephardt's 1989 speeches betray the same problem that his 1988 campaign speeches did: he expends far more energy and eloquence describing America's trade crisis and the threat that Japan poses to us than he does in describing how our government and industry can improve their own performance. He acknowledges that Japanese trade barriers represent only a small part of the reason for the trade deficit between the two countries, but he devotes most of his speeches to attacking them. This neatly parallels American public prejudices. According to a recent Yankelovich poll, 61 percent of Americans think the Japanese are successful in world trade because they make quality products and only 24 percent believe it's because they are unfair traders. Yet 61 percent want to restrict Japanese products and 76 percent regard them as a threat to American economic security.

Gephardt contends, persuasively, that to open Japanese markets to American goods will require tough bargaining. Yet there is also an element of panic and pessimism in Gephardt's oratory—"before long, Japan won't *ask* us to pay our debt in yen. They will *tell* us"—that goes beyond the necessities of negotiation and threatens to whip up dangerous nativist sentiments. Gephardt also says that free-trade agreements with the Japanese are unlikely to work, and that the solution to the trade imbalance might have to be bilateral agreements setting the level of imports. That is a prescription for a cartelized world—which Gephardt also contemplated last

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year in urging production controls in agriculture.

Gephardt does praise Japan for absorbing the shock of a super-valued yen by improving industrial productivity and cutting labor costs, yet he opposes wage give-backs by American labor and opposes Japan-style tax concessions to industry. His answer to improving productivity is to "demand that our corporations reinvest in this nation ... end tax incentives for wasteful mergers ... create tax penalties for financial manipulation, and enforce anti-trust laws." Gephardt is calling for only modest increases in spending for education and no new taxes except an oil import fee.

Republican leaders such as Newt Gingrich think that a Gephardt-led Democratic Party remains too tied to unions and to a government-regulated economy to win national power. But the truth is that economic nationalism with a tinge of anti-Asian demagoguery just might have gotten Gephardt the 1992 presidential nomination. So perhaps Jim Wright's misfortune is the world's gain. Ambitious Dick Gephardt probably will run for president in 1996. And by that time, he may have figured out a positive program for American economic strength.

The cold war was lost, not won.

ENOUGH ROPE

By John Mueller

The list of people who consider the cold war to be more or less over keeps growing. Even President Bush now says it is time to move "beyond containment" and "to integrate the Soviet Union into the community of nations." Some hardliners still warn of a possible relapse, and their wariness is reasonable. But for now, at least, things look good: the Soviet Union appears sincere in its postrevolutionary yearning for a "quiet, normal international situation," as Mikhail Gorbachev has put it; and influential Westerners from almost everywhere along the political spectrum seem to be rooting for Gorbachev's success.

For some conservatives, one benefit of declaring the cold war over is that they can then claim to be the ones who won it. The Soviet Union's ongoing retreat, in their view, is a vindication of Ronald Reagan's eight years of aggressive opposition to communism—and, more generally, of the policy of containment that has long characterized American foreign policy and that, though less militant than the Reagan Doctrine, has often been championed by conservatives.

It is nice that the Soviet Union's redirection leaves so many conservatives in the West feeling triumphant, but the truth is that the West didn't win the cold war at all. The Soviet Union lost it. Almost all the calamities that have brought the U.S.S.R. to its present desperate condition—compelling it not only to abandon expansionism but to rethink its political and economic philosophy—have been self-inflicted. And to the extent that American policy *has* contributed to the mellowing of the Soviet Union, neither the Reagan Doctrine nor the policy of containment has been crucial. In fact, it is more nearly the case that the occasional *failures* of containment are what doomed Soviet communism.

Everyone agrees that a major cause of the Soviet Union's redirection has been the staggering failure of its bureaucratic and economic system, which stifles initiative and enshrines inefficiency and dislocation. That system, however, was the Soviets' idea, and the fact that it is now catching up with them cannot be credited to Ronald Reagan or anyone else in the United States. Similarly, the Soviets have sought to suppress, often brutally, ancient nationalisms and freedoms. The contradictions that are now emerging from that failed policy owe nothing to the West, which has always rigorously opposed it. Nor can the fact that the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe has become a severe economic drain be credited to Western policy—which, of course, strenuously opposed its formation from the beginning.

The champions of containment might concede these points but reply that the contradictions of Soviet communism have been heightened by competition with the West in the international arena. This argument is strongest as it relates to arms policy. The Soviets' vast economy-straining arms buildup is undoubtedly a reaction in part to Western defense spending. But in large part it is not. Central to the classic Soviet Communist view of the world has been an intense suspicion of, and hostility toward, the surrounding capitalist world, a suspicion that verges on paranoia. Indeed, the West tried to level or reduce arms expenditures several times—in the mid-1940s, the 1960s, and the 1970s. Each time the Soviets demonstrated that their policy was "too much is not enough." As Jimmy Carter's secretary of defense, Harold Brown, reluctantly concluded, "When we build, they build; when we cut back, they build."

Soviet ideology also has had at its center a messianic drive to undermine the capitalist enemy, and it is on this drive that containment is directly focused. As Bush has pointed out, the hope has been that if this expansionary impetus were systematically frustrated, Soviet foreign policy would eventually mellow. Accordingly, the United States has sought to counter pro-Communist movements not only in areas of highest concern, such as Western Europe, but also in such peripheral areas as Korea, Laos, and the Congo. The lesson of Munich has been applied: when a country bent on expansion gains territory, the experience only whets its appetite for more. Thus when Communist expansion has been thwarted—as in Greece in the 1940s, in Korea in the 1950s, or in Central Africa in the 1960s—the policy has

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been held to have been successful. When areas have fallen into the Communist camp—as in Eastern Europe in the late 1940s, China in 1949, North Vietnam in 1954, Cuba in 1959, and portions of Laos in 1961—containment has been held to have suffered a setback.

But in fact, the less "successful" containment has been, the worse things have gotten for the Soviets. In 1975 three countries—Cambodia, South Vietnam, and Laos—fell into the Communist camp. Then, suffering from post-Vietnam syndrome, the United States went into something of a containment funk and watched from the sidelines as the Soviet Union, in what seems in retrospect remarkably like a fit of absent-mindedness, gathered a slew of Third World countries into its imperial embrace: Angola in 1976, Mozambique and Ethiopia in 1977, South Yemen and Afghanistan in 1978, Grenada and Nicaragua in 1979.

The Soviets at first were gleeful about these acquisitions; the "correlation of forces," they concluded, had decisively shifted in their direction. Ultimately, though, these gains didn't whet the Soviet appetite for more. They not only satiated the appetite for expansion but gave the expanders a case of indigestion. For almost all the new acquisitions soon became economic and political basket cases, fraught with dissension, financial mismanagement, and civil warfare. Some of this was due to the peculiar circumstances of the nations involved, but in broad terms the economic problems of the Soviet Union's client states shouldn't have surprised anyone; the Communist economic system is inherently unproductive, so a Communist overseer is not a likely savior for a Third World economy. To cap their decade-long acquisition of liabilities, in 1979 the Soviets sent troops into Afghanistan, and descended into a long period of enervating warfare there.

Charles Wolf and his colleagues at the RAND Corporation have estimated that the cost of the Soviet empire rose enormously between 1971 and 1980, from about one percent of its gross national product to nearly three percent when measured in dollars, or from under two percent to about seven percent when measured in rubles. (Wolf's "cost of empire" includes all economic and military aid, except the cost of stationing soldiers in Eastern Europe—who, Wolf assumes, would have been in uniform even if they had been in the Soviet Union. The figure also includes the cost of conducting the war in Afghanistan.) By comparison, insofar as the United States can be said to have a comparable empire, its cost—i.e., economic and military aid to foreign countries—is less than one-half of one percent of GNP.

It was just at the time when expansion was becoming a burden of almost unbearable proportions for the Soviet Union that the Reagan administration began trying to put an end to it, and even to reverse it. Reagan provided military aid to the *contras* in Nicaragua, accelerated the Carter administration's provision of aid to the Afghan resistance, and engaged in low-cost, high-profile demonstrations of military resolve, such as the Grenada invasion. All of this can be loosely described as an application of containment policy. (Strictly speaking, Nicaragua, Afghanistan, and Grenada are examples of "rollback," not containment, but during the transitional period when Communist rule in a country is still coalescing, the line between the two is somewhat fuzzy.) In this sense, containment may have contributed to ending the cold war, since the war in Afghanistan, at least, certainly helped raise Soviet imperial costs. But that war was started and perpetuated by Afghan resentment at Soviet occupation, not by the containment strategy. The arms sent there may have deepened the damage the anti-Soviet forces could inflict, but the central dilemma for the Soviets—the reality that made the war a "running sore"—was the willingness of the rebels to fight for decades if necessary to free their country.

The key point is that the cost of maintaining the Soviet empire—which almost everyone now agrees was important in moderating Soviet ambitions—rose sharply during the de facto appeasement of the 1970s, not during the containment/rollback of the 1980s. Indeed, during the early 1980s, as Soviet expansion stopped, the costs of empire actually began declining (thanks in part to a drop in the price of oil, a commodity that the Soviet Union subsidizes heavily for its client states). Nonetheless, those costs remained high by American standards, and they continued to take a toll. The Soviet economy stagnated under the weight of foreign commitments and of its own backwardness: GNP during the 1980s grew at less than two percent annually in real terms. It was near the beginning of this stagnation that articles by Soviet academics and government advisers began expressing the fear that Nicaragua could become "another Cuba." And they meant not what Americans mean by that phrase—a thorn in the side of the United States—but rather a bottomless pit for Soviet money. The Soviets were beginning to understand what Americans still have trouble grasping: the Red Peril was most perilous for its sponsor.

None of this is to say that containment has been a useless policy. It doubtless deserves credit for keeping some countries outside the Soviet orbit. Without a containment war in the 1950s, South Koreans would now be living as miserably as their fellow Koreans in the North. Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore need only look to the Indochina states to see what might have happened if Communist rebels had been successful in their countries.

It could also be argued—very speculatively—that containment helped reduce the danger of a major war. If the North Koreans had been successful in 1950 in overrunning the South, hawks in the international Communist movement would surely have been encouraged to consider employing the technique elsewhere. Instead, the sour experience in Korea seems to have permanently discredited such military probes; there have been no Koreas since Korea. (Most historians now agree, however, that the main impetus toward that war came from the North Koreans, not from Stalin's Krem-

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lin, which greatly feared a wider war. Thus precipitate military action might not have been forthcoming even in the wake of a quick Korean success.) Similarly, had South Vietnam been allowed to succumb to communism in 1965, the event would have been profoundly encouraging to Communist theorists—particularly those in China—who were almost hysterically committed to the view that the United States and other Western nations were "paper tigers."

The Western policy of containment, then, has helped keep some countries free from communism, and it may have further reduced the already low post-World War II danger of major war. But insofar as it was devised to force the Soviets to face the fundamental futility of communism, it has foundered on a curious paradox. The early containment theorists were correct to conclude that Soviet communism is a singularly undesirable and pathetically flawed form of government, and they were right to anticipate that it would inevitably mellow when it could no longer avoid confronting its inner contradictions. But Soviet communism probably would have reached this point somewhat earlier if its natural propensity to expand had been tolerated rather than resisted.

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The curse of Asian American success.

FALSE MODESTY

By Reed Ueda

Asian Americans are everyone's favorite minority but their own. They have the highest average household income of any ethnic group, one of the broadest occupational bases, and a disproportionately high representation at the nation's best universities. Yet many Asian Americans like nothing less than to be called "the nation's model minority." For Bob Suzuki, an education professor at the University of Massachusetts, the affluence attained by Asian American households tells the wrong part of the story: "Their income figures alone would hardly reveal their personal agonies over frustrated ambitions, broken dreams, and suppressed anger." And for Amy Uyematsu, a contributor to an Asian American reader, the very success of Asian American assimilation is a sign of failure: "Asian Americans still try to gain complete acceptance by denying their yellowness."

As strange as it might seem to readers of cover stories in *Time* and *Newsweek* on "those amazing Asians," these tortured reactions are the rule rather than the exception among scholars in Asian American studies—especially Asian American scholars in Asian American studies. They have concentrated largely on what's wrong with Asian Americans rather than what's right. Their views represent a startling reversal of the traditional self-image of this group, and ultimately say more about the exigencies of American ethnic ideology than about the state of the Asian American community.

Historically, Asian American spokesmen cultivated the appearance of success. In the pre-World War II era of open anti-Asian nativism, they were eager to create a positive image of their communities. In doing so, they played upon a certain amount of received admiration. Woodrow Wilson, while professor of jurisprudence and politics at Princeton, admired Chinese immigrants for "their skill, their intelligence, their hardy power of labor, their knack at succeeding and driving duller rivals out." The Asian American immigrant's desire to overcome ostracism was reflected in a conformity to society's norms. The nisei, the American-born children of Japanese immigrants, achieved uniformly high citizenship marks in public schools. In an open letter written to President Wilson in 1919, the Japanese Association of California explained, "We tried to impart to our fellow countrymen elementary facts of American civilization so they could better fit themselves for American life."

The nisei believed that educational success would attest to their Americanism and give them the meritocratic credentials that would convince white Americans to accept them in the wider society. They inculcated this view of assimilation in their children, the sansei. In that respect, Japanese-American academic performance was comparable to that of Jewish immigrants. A common civic patriotism united the Japanese-American scholar-citizen ideal and Mary Antin's famous autobiographical evocation of the Jewish American scholar-citizen in *The Promised Land.*

Today Asian American advocacy groups, far from taking pride in group success, criticize it as a form of racial subordination. Asian Americans worry that the model minority image has led outsiders to regard them as complacent. In conveying an absence of social conflicts, it made Asian American interests all but invisible in policy-making and public discourse; although poverty, discrimination, and social alienation afflicted the newly arrived immigrant and refugee communities, Asian Americans were not widely seen as a disadvantaged minority. At the frontiers of social mobility, Asians also felt new limits and subtler forms of prejudice—the "glass ceiling," for example, in U.S. businesses, where they are still perceived as narrow technical specialists rather than well-rounded leaders. A continuing sense of ethnic otherness produced anxiety and self-doubt. The bland model minority image failed to do justice to these realities.

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In many ways, that image also was a casualty of generational change. Members of the postwar generation were uneasy with their material advantages and their acculturation to white norms and felt guilty about losing touch with traditional Asian culture. Many of them seized on race as the key to their identity and criticized their nisei parents and grandparents for knuckling under to the white majority. What the new generation wanted was a liberated Asian American identity and culture that transcended the accommodationist ways of their forebears.

Their search led Asian American liberals and radicals to adopt the politics of race just as institutional, legal, and structural discrimination against Asians was diminishing. In the Japanese community, the sansei began to emphasize racial empowerment rather than civic equality. Michi Weglyn, a nisei author, noted in 1976 that "if the sansei were to have their way," they would change the Japanese-American Citizens League, founded by pro-American and assimilationist nisei, "into an Asian American coalition for maximum political clout."

Larger political forces also helped undermine the image of the model minority. It was out of step with a post-Great Society liberalism that supported the cause of racial justice, and it threatened the new political ties that Asian Americans were forging with blacks, Chicanos, and Native Americans. By seemingly attesting to the openness of the American system, the success of Asians saddled other minorities with the burden of their failures, leaving them with an uncomfortable question: "If the Japanese-Americans can overcome racial discrimination, why can't you?" The model minority ideology could be used as an argument against class-based reform policies or affirmative action. Liberal and radical Asians thus hastened to defy the image of successful Asian assimilation and expose it as just another means of majority oppression.

True, the glowing statistics on Asian American household income and education are in some ways misleading. There is a heated debate about whether in fact Asian Americans earn as much as white Americans with equal qualifications, and one reason they earn more than other households is that more family members work. Finally, although Japanese, Chinese, and Korean families have done well, some newer arrivals who came to this country under more turbulent circumstances—the Vietnamese and Cambodians, for example—have yet to duplicate their success. But Asian Americans still have among the lowest incidences of poverty in the country and the highest degrees of educational attainment. And interracial marriage is increasing—another measure, in some ways, that discrimination is on the wane.

It is certainly true that the model-minority model does a disservice by promoting facile comparisons between Asians and other ethnic groups. The historical pattern of Asian American accommodation is very different from that of blacks or Native Americans. Asian immigrants migrated voluntarily with the intention of material self-betterment, and they were able to transplant and control their communal organization while becoming part of an industrializing economy. They adapted to American conditions such institutions as language schools, ethnic churches, and countless mutual-benefit associations that provided everything from job referrals to loans, thereby facilitating a degree of educational and economic mobility that rivaled European groups.

Unlike European immigrants, Asian immigrants were subjected to severe forms of racial discrimination such as exclusion from naturalized citizenship. But the process of adaptation common to all immigrants kept them from coalescing into racial ghettoes. Rather than becoming a submerged caste, Asian Americans came to resemble other "middleman" populations such as the Jews in Europe or the Armenians in Turkey.

Unfortunately, the self-conscious downplaying of Asian American success threatens to obscure those lessons its history *does* hold for other minorities. One leading historian has noted that though much attention has been paid to the internment of Japanese-Americans, the story of how they rebuilt their communities and lives after World War II has been virtually ignored. Much of the historical literature has neglected the constructive endeavors issuing from within group life. There is no historical mobility study of Asian Americans comparable to the large number of studies on European immigrant groups. The origins of an Asian American work ethic and thrift ethic are begging for scholarly attention. There is only a slim historical literature examining how Asian Americans started businesses, built homes and farms, orchestrated family resources, and educated their children. Only recently have scholars begun to address those topics.

But a historical perspective raises questions that some Asian Americans would rather not answer. Their patterns of integration and of social mobility suggest that their interests would be better served by a full equalization of opportunity in existing social and institutional structures rather than by the creation of a separate system of opportunity through affirmative action.

Moreover, any open-minded historical inquiry uncovers an irreducible fact. Many ordinary Asian Americans have embraced the model image not out of any desire to placate whites, but because they believe it. Large numbers of Korean-Americans and Chinese-Americans are enthusiastic Republicans who think the "success story" of hard work, and patient self-help reflects their own lives. Liberal Japanese-American Democrats find it relevant as well. It's hard to see the new ideology providing comparable political or economic inspiration. The model minority image may be imperfect, but many Asian Americans feel that it's not a bad place to start.

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How moderate Muslims survive.

MIDDLING THROUGH

By Mahnaz Ispahani

Salman Rushdie is in hiding, but in the Muslim world he is everywhere. In the old section of Dhaka, in Bangladesh, he may be seen on posters stuck to moldering walls, with a noose around his neck. A recent march there, provoked and politicized by Islamic fundamentalists, was led, I was told, with the chant, "Salman Rushdie must leave Dhaka!" The sloganeers were informed that Rushdie was not in Dhaka, that he is somewhere in England. They were unfazed. "Salman Rushdie must leave England!" they cried, and marched on.

The decade of Khomeini, and the day of Rushdie, has revived concerns in the West about the specter of a Muslim monolith, nearly a billion strong, thick in militancy and stretching from Morocco to Indonesia. The many faces of Islam are reduced to a single scowling countenance. In fact, the West shares the image of a unitary, universal Islam with Muslim fundamentalists themselves. The West fears it; they revel in it. For the one it means terror; for the other, triumph.

The death of Ayatollah Khomeini marked the passing of one of the postwar world's most influential leaders. By preaching a fiery brand of religious transnationalism, and by insisting that "neither East nor West" was his master, Khomeini transformed the debate about Islam and politics in a world where every fifth person is a Muslim. The consequences of Khomeini's death are uncertain: it may be the harbinger of a new competition between Islamic radicalisms, or it may provide an opportunity for more tolerant aspirants to Muslim leadership—for the Muslim modernists.

Between the historical intrusions of the West into the Muslim world and the modern religious crusades of the ayatollahs stands this modernist, a humane, elusive character, the Muslim in the middle. Many of the early independence-seekers and state-builders of postcolonial Asia and Africa were Muslim modernists. The recent election of Benazir Bhutto, the constitutional transfer of power to the first woman to lead a Muslim nation in modern history, is one sign that the Muslim in the middle endures.

The Muslim in the middle fears neither tradition nor modernity. He is alert to the sometimes oppressive economic, political, and cultural intrusions of the West into his societies, but he does not respond with the fundamentalists' blanket blame of Western ideas and instruments of progress. He accepts and honors the diversity of Muslim societies and the particularities of Muslim politics, is wary of state-imposed religion, and considers pluralism a condition for social progress. He argues for a dispassionate reading of Islamic history, against a dolled-up or falsified past, a rural myth, or a religious fantasy. He does not believe that development requires that Islam be absent or forgotten.

I traveled recently to four predominantly Muslim countries, with a combined population of over 400 million, partly to reassure myself of Islam's seemingly elusive diversity and of the vitality of Muslim modernists. I was reassured. I found the Muslim in the middle in Bangladesh, in Indonesia, in Pakistan, and in Turkey. In each place I was reminded that, as a Turkish architectural historian put it, there is no "Islam in general." The Muslim world is a congeries of Muslim forms, shaped by poverty, by place, by historically specific accretions of beliefs and traditions. The unifying ideal of Muslim community, the universality of Islamic principles, is everywhere stressed, of course; but the Muslim *ummah*, the community, is fantastically diverse. I heard, in slums no less than in universities, vigorous debates among Muslims about the encounter between Islam and modernity, about the path between fundamentalism and assimilation.

At a meeting in Dhaka, Mohammed Arkoun, an Algerian scholar of Islam who teaches at the Sorbonne, was outspoken about the need for Muslims to abandon their "theological" and "mythical" approaches to history, which he described as the great impediments to progress, and about the need to treat history as a "positive science," without which neither progress nor power is possible. A thousand miles away in a Karachi slum, Dr. Akhtar Hamid Khan, the lumbering guru of community development, excoriated Muslim myth-makers for inciting all the wrong hopes: Europeans are no longer inspired by Charlemagne's example, he said, but some Muslims still want their own Holy Roman Empire. In Istanbul, Dogan Kuban, an eminent historian of

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architecture, insisted that without free thought, without rationalism, no renascence of Muslim societies is possible. And in Jakarta, even Abdul Rahman Wahid, the conservative leader of Nahdatul Ulema, the largest rural-based Muslim organization in Indonesia, spoke in favor of intellectual freedom and a pluralist polity.

These attitudes have concrete political implications. Turkey, for example, has been embroiled in a controversy with religious radicals, supported by Iran, over whether or not university women should be permitted to wear religious head coverings to class. But the unique secular legacy of Ataturk is resilient: the Supreme Court has ruled that the religious headdress is unconstitutional.

In Bangladesh it is the fact of poverty that overwhelms all talk about Muslim history or Muslim progress. It seems, sometimes, beyond reckoning. In Dhaka, the capital city, there is always but half an inch between you and the rest of humanity. Every street is an anarchy. Men, not beasts, pull the heavy loads, because in this country men are less precious, more readily replaced, than beasts. Everywhere women and little children (when women are impoverished, they cannot be forced behind the veil, behind the wall) break bricks in the pitiless sun. The Buriganga river hosts strange flotillas of men who dive, they say, for soil from the riverbed.

The unique power of water over this particular Muslim culture is plain. Its rivers have nourished Muslim civilizations since 1204. (The earlier rulers were Hindu and Buddhist.) But as the rivers change their course, they (and the rains and the floods) destroy virtually all traces of these histories. Few temples, stupas, or brick mosques survive the vicissitudes of Bengali water. And those that do survive draw "brickhunters," impoverished scavengers among the ruins of cultures, who dismantle the remnants, stone by stone, to build new shelters. Thus, the conservation of a historical identity looks like a Herculean task. Cultures, too, must dive for soil.

The debates about Muslim modernism here are nicely illustrated by the controversy over the Parliament building in Dhaka. Designed by the American architect Louis Kahn, and built between 1965 and 1982, this remote concrete masterwork, a gray, highly formal fortress of massive geometrical shapes, surrounded by water and Bengali redbrick, is a testimonial to the Pakistani general Ayub Khan's "solution" for the Bengalis, who were once Pakistan's second-class citizens. Dhaka was to be a "second capital" of united Pakistan, and the Kahn complex was to be its monumental symbol.

Architectural modernists abroad adore Kahn's Parliament building. They call it timeless, a happy mingling of grand east and grand west, of local themes and materials with the dogmas of Western modernism. Its critics, however, complain that it is a waste of precious space and funds (it costs $2 million a year to maintain), a representation of false hopes (Bangladeshis live under the rule of yet another "President-General"), a jarring penetration by the West. But there are also Bengalis who argue passionately for Kahn's building in the name of their own particular concerns. The building is a symbol, they say, of Bangladesh's political aspirations and its capacity to build. Why should Bangladesh be known only for its floods, only as a victim? This building by a Western creator, then, may serve a Bengali purpose.

Not all Muslim cultures have been wrecked by nature's hardships. Some Muslim societies seem overrich with pasts and patrimonies. "Syncretism par excellence" is how a local journalist explains Indonesia: "Before we were Muslim, we were Hindu; before that, we were Buddhist; before that, we were animist." Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim country, with about 160 million people, only about 12 percent of whom publicly belong to other faiths. Islam spread late here, after the 15th century. In 1965 the Communists were brutally eradicated, an estimated 500,000 people were killed, and the Partai Komunis Indonesia was banned. Since then, the state has required citizens to declare a faith.

Java, where more than half of all Indonesians live, and where, it is said, the Muslims are mainly *abangan* or "nominal," is almost madly syncretic. (Orthodox Islam is strongest in the coastal areas of Kalimantan, Sumatra, and Sulawesi.) Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and animism join Islam here; and the profane histories of many imperialists are intertwined. A single state houses Borobudur, the early medieval Hindu-Buddhist shrine to meditation that took almost a century to build; Sukarno's grandiose, sometimes Soviet-sponsored monuments to Socialist Realism; traditional pavilion-style Javanese mosques with their pitched brick roofs (in parts of Java there is not a domed mosque in sight); and the dauntingly modern Istiqlal national mosque in Jakarta, the work of a Protestant architect.

In Jogjakarta, the heart of Javanese culture, the Muslim sultan Hamengku Buwono X communes with the Goddess of the Southern Seas without apparent controversy. His *keraton*, or palace, perfectly illustrates the fluency with chaos that characterizes Javanese Islam. Its ceremonial columns wear the gold of Buddhism, the red of Hinduism, the enscripted black of Islam, the green of Java. The clean, quiet, inward-looking villages, home to the *santri* or "observant" Muslims, coexist with, for example, the rather complicated family of a prominent Indonesian architect: he is Muslim, his father Buddhist, his sisters Catholic. Most remarkably, perhaps, Javanese women pray in mosques—a sight scarcely seen in Gulf Arab societies.

The intrusive Indonesian state enforces its "five principles"—belief in one God, humanitarianism, national unity, "democracy through deliberation," and social justice. It is a secular ideology from which deviation is a crime, as well as the mantra of material development. Secularism has a natural ally in the popular attachment to Javanese culture, which amounts to an in-built spur to the separation of the state from the faith. Suharto's government funds Muslim schools and mosques, but it prohibits their politicization. (There are militant Muslims who view Islam as the only unified force capable of chal-

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lenging Suharto's New Order.) The Muslim dilemmas here, according to one writer, are: Can one be a good Indonesian and a good Muslim? Can we shape a role for Islam in our lives without Arab or Iranian orthodoxies? Again, the questions of the Muslim in the middle.

Muslim societies are all developing ones, faced with the need to change in a time of poverty. Jakarta (with eight million to 12 million people), Karachi (eight to ten million), Dhaka (five to six million), and Istanbul (six to seven million) are cities with exploding populations. They are magnets for an unceasing migration from rural areas, bloated and immobilized by traffic, tense with squatters and slums, frantic with quick construction and quick decay, full of the diseased smells that the West forgot decades, even centuries, ago.

The future of these cities is linked to the future of the second- and third-generation rural migrants who are growing restive in their wretched urban settlements. In Istanbul, this population supplied young recruits to the violent left-wing squads during the '70s; today it supplies foot soldiers for the radical Islamic movements. These unplanned urban settlements—*kachi abadis* in Pakistan, kampongs in Indonesia, *gecekondu* in Turkey—house (or do not quite house) some 40 percent of each city's population without proper services.

In practical terms, the Muslim modernists face the trials of progress at two levels: in community development, and in the marriage of sophisticated technology with shared Islamic concepts and unique local traditions. In the *kachi abadis* of Karachi, an unusual project focused on community participation in development, on self-reliance based on the Muslim ideal of community, is strikingly successful. The township of Orangi, with nearly one million residents, may be Asia's largest and most ethnically troubled slum. It is the home of the non-governmental Orangi Pilot Project (OPP), led by the indefatigable Dr. Akhtar Hamid Khan and supervised, remarkably, by a young female architect.

OPP does not believe that the simple transfer of Western funds or high technology can change developing societies. Instead, it combines basic technologies, individual self-help and community efforts, and cultural adaptation. It has spearheaded social and economic change in a strife-ridden community that had a case of typhoid in nearly every household, plus scabies, diarrhea, and high infant mortality rates. It's a place where, as Dr. Khan puts it, medieval sanitation and medieval notions about disease have led to medieval epidemics. OPP's approach toward women intelligently takes account of their low status in Muslim society, where they are usually illiterate, segregated, and abused, and leave their homes only "in distress." Rather than wait futilely for women to visit their clinics, OPP workers take family planning and health education into selected homes.

The modestly funded experiment has been successful where other slum improvement programs enjoying large amounts of foreign aid have failed. Through reducing the cost and improving the quality of sanitation equipment and bricks, through providing channels for borrowing loans, through furnishing technical advice (generally the poor see masons, not architects and engineers; quacks, not doctors; bribe-takers, not loan-givers), through establishing work centers for women and cutting out the middleman-contractor, and through pursuing immunization and birth control, nearly three-quarters of Orangi's sewers have been chased underground, disease and mortality rates have been reduced, family planning and literacy have increased, and women workers have been organized to earn higher wages. Importantly, since Orangi's poor are active participants in their own progress, they have become increasingly self-managing, with an interest in the results of their labors, as well as in cooperation in an ethnically divided area.

Community-oriented slum development is being pursued in Jakarta too, where 20 years ago, 60 percent of the city (known as the "biggest village in the world") was essentially bereft of urban services. In 1971 Suharto's government began a program to upgrade living conditions in the kampongs. A unique feature of the progress made here, and one that is much valued in Muslim societies, is the continued cohesion of the improved community: the majority of the aspirants to middle-class life are said to stay in the kampongs as they prosper. As one Indonesian put it, "If you don't belong to a community here, you're crazy, a madman."

Still other modernists, at the $300 million Aga Khan University Hospital in Karachi, are harnessing high technology with Islamic aesthetics and local Pakistani materials and crafts. It is open to all—an unprecedented achievement in the developing world. Like the Kahn building in Dhaka, this forceful symbol of modernity is controversial. Critics protest that it is an extravagance, that Karachi's poor are made insecure by its imposing design and its arcane instruments. Yet it successfully represents the aspirations of a forward-looking Muslim community: to improve health and medical education, and to modify traditional inhibitions about modernization. The school of nursing, the first of its kind in the Muslim world, aims to improve the status and increase the participation of women in development.

Meanwhile, all around these Muslim modernizers, the fundamentalists continue to press in. In Indonesia, on the islands of Sumbawa and Sumatra, radical Muslim preachers have been delivering incendiary sermons. In Istanbul, fundamentalists wish to turn Turkey's most enduring and powerful cultural symbol, the great-domed Hagia a Sophia—Justinian's lordly Byzantine church, which Mehmet II turned triumphantly into the central mosque of the Ottoman Empire, and which the secularizing Ataturk, in a different kind of triumph, turned into a museum in the early years of the Republic—into a mosque once more. The experiments of the Muslim in the middle, in sum, are fragile things. These Muslim modernists are struggling, against great odds, to show their brethren that an honest recollection of the past is a boon to the future, to show others that there is no inevitable contradiction between culture, faith, and modernity. And it is still their day, too. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

A Village in Brooklyn

People like villages. This is as evident in cities as in villages themselves. People in one area of a city try to sequester that area, think of it as self-contained. The area can be defined by race or country of origin or economic class, but one quality or another makes it an enclave. The village can even be just one block: when I was a boy in Manhattan, the chief rival of the 68th Street stickball team was the 65th Street team.

Spike Lee's village is one block in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn, a block filled with blacks and Hispanics. (There's a Korean grocery shop on one corner.) **Do the Right Thing** (Universal) concentrates on the block with all the intensity that traditional regionalists of Europe or rural America used to bring to their larger landscapes. We see love affairs, rivalries, eccentrics, observers, and commentators. We get hardly a glimpse of the neighborhood roundabout, let alone the city at large. Life is right here. Possibly because it all takes place in 24 hours on a sweltering summer day, I thought—allowing for changes—of Elmer Rice's *Street Scene*. Especially since the dailiness of the scene is finally shaken by violence.

Lee's first film was a documentary about Bedford-Stuyvesant. His first feature, *She's Gotta Have It* (1986), was a sex comedy about Brooklyn blacks, in which he played one of a queen bee's drones and in which the funk was so thick you didn't want to cut it with a knife—it belonged. His second feature, *School Daze* (1988), about a black Southern college, was less good, less sure, and had a lot of the self-mockery that seems endemic to minority groups. (Cf. Jewish self-hatred.) *Do the Right Thing* is his third feature, and it isn't just a progress from the first two, it's a qualitative leap.

From the first shots, it shows the absolute essential of filmmaking (as, for instance, *Chocolat* did): it assures us that the maker saw the film before he started, knew the texture that he wanted, the look, the pace, the interlocking rhythms. Lee had the camera of his usual cinematographer Ernest Dickerson (a film-school friend), and together they decided on a sepia tone that would hang over the film like a haze of heat through which the people moved. Lee also saw the film as opening out from the neighborhood radio station, coursing up and down the street, picking up lives and putting them down again, like a weaver who has a pattern in his head. Except that in this case, the pattern seems dictated to the weaver by the materials.

That's the film's best achievement, its texture. Like every filmmaker, Lee knew from the script (which he wrote) where he was going, but he almost never gives us a hint of manufacture. Allowing for a few exceptions, it's the characters who seem to be writing the script. I couldn't always understand what they were saying—some "in" phrases and terms got past me—but the cast, by and large, seems spied on and overheard.

The black actors, that is. There are a few whites, and with them a different quality enters. John Savage moves through for a few minutes, unconnected with anything in the film except that he's the new owner of a brownstone on the block. Savage is consciously playing a bit part. On the corner is Sal's Pizzeria, which has all black and Hispanic customers, run by an Italian-American and his two sons in their 20s. These three are realistic in the mode of film realism, which is a slightly different, though not false, quality from the rest of the realism.

Teasings, quarrels, complaints, resignation—they are the matter of most of the picture. The people of this village are poor but not wretched. Lee himself plays the delivery man for the pizzeria, and in the course of the day he visits his Hispanic girlfriend and their small son, who live on the block. (The only way she can get him to visit is to order a pizza.) Lives flow past: the three men who sit all day against a wall, commenting and joshing like a comic chorus; the spastic youth trying to sell photographs; the young ones hanging out together; the gentle old boozer who floats up and down the block all day. Pizzas, whole or by the slice, get ordered and eaten. The most exciting event is when the old boozer pulls a child out of the way of a car. The beauty of the film is that the placidity,

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amid which the bickerings are like ripples on an easy stream, is sufficient. I thought the film was going to end as the sun set on the street's usual life.

Then one young black man roils things. On one wall of the pizzeria is a photo gallery of famous Italian-Americans. The black man complains that there isn't one black face on the wall though all the customers are black. Sal, the owner, says he's been running this place for 25 years, and that's the way the wall is going to stay. His two sons, rabidly anti-black (which Sal isn't), back him. Because of this refusal, a young black comes into the pizzeria with his ghetto blaster blaring—something Sal has warned him against—with music much like the film's sound track. Sal smashes the radio with a baseball bat. This leads to violence, police, graver violence, riot, destruction.

At first this eruption seems a change of fabric. Then this feeling is confirmed: that's exactly what Lee intended. He is dramatizing the fact that the placidity was deceptive, that the chuckles and chitchat among blacks or between blacks and whites are no proof that all is well. Sal's survival for 25 years on this street was more luck than cunning. The explosives were always underneath and only needed a spark. At the very last we see two quotations, one from Martin Luther King Jr. against violence, the other from Malcolm X stating that violence can sometimes be self-defense. It would be too much to say that the film is no more than a warning about the fire next time, but Lee surely means to caution whites against taking apparent "village" life as lethargy.

In this veristic film only one element is missing, drugs. They're never mentioned. Not many black communities like this one, or white ones for that matter, would be drug-free. The film was shot on location in Bed-Stuy, and the publicity material says that some crack houses in the street were shut down for the shooting. Why did Lee exclude drugs from his humanely realistic film?

Ossie Davis as the boozer; Ruby Dee, that fine actress with an unfulfilled career in white America, as a sort of neighborhood Delphic oracle; Rosie Perez as Lee's sharp-tongued but devoted girlfriend; Robin Harris as the sunny-voiced leader of the choric trio; Bill Nunn as the radio bearer, are all excellent, acting out of—dare I say it?—roots. Danny Aiello, as Sal, gives his best film performance to date, about five parts reality to one part acting. John Turturro and Richard Edson, as Sal's sons, know all the traditional actor's moves of the parts they play.

Lee, as the delivery man, is so spindly and ambling that it's amusing to realize that he's the person who generated the whole enterprise and so dexterously

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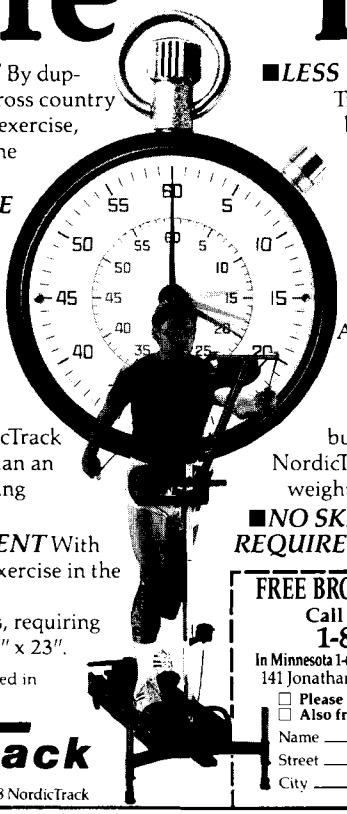

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controlled it. The closing scenes of violence are done with a fine sense of visual dynamics. The teasing scenes show his enjoyment of them and his ability to share it. The scenes between him and his girlfriend are neatly understated—actually saltily counterstated—moments of affection. My two quarrels are that Lee tilts the camera overmuch, superfluously, and that there are three diatribes—inserted, addressed to the camera—which divert attention from the content of the film to the film itself.

Lee is a valuable American director, not least because of his amazing, admirably arrogant persistence. Three pictures in three years! And it's an added benefit that he's black. There's a great deal in black America that has yet to reach the screen, and Lee is a prime candidate, in gift and gall, to help fill the gap.

The culture(s) teachers should teach.

Crimes Against Humanities

BY TZVETAN TODOROV

Is there a crisis in the humanities as they are taught in American universities? To judge from the harshness of the debate now raging in the United States, there most certainly is. Some claim the humanities are sick unto death, others retort that they have never been in better shape. Of course, the cry that "our society is in crisis" (or, more moderately, "in a state of transition") has been uttered by every generation since the dawn of modernity; all it generally reveals is the egocentric viewpoint of the observer. "Things were better in the good old days" is another eternal refrain, which can be explained by a quite understandable preference for the time of youth. But it would be a mistake wearily to dismiss the whole debate. It presents an opportunity to think about the state of a crucial section of our culture: the teaching of literature, history, and philosophy.

The accusations have become important because voices from outside the academic world have amplified them. That certain professors deplore the situation of their fields is nothing new. What is new, and far more significant, is the huge popular success of books in which these criticisms are expressed. The most widely read dailies and weeklies of the American press have taken up a theme that was hitherto restricted to members of the profession. The National Endowment for the Humanities, responsible for financing a good deal of the research in this area, has produced documents that codify the criticisms; the most recent of these, *Humanities in America*, is signed by Lynne Cheney, the director of the NEH. If one believes that universities should contribute to the well-being of the communities to which they belong, one cannot ignore this chorus of legitimate voices. The reproaches they make must be taken, if not always literally, at least seriously.

We can summarize the position of the prosecution. The decline it describes is anything but a subjective impression. Between 1966 and 1986 the number of bachelor's degrees in American universities increased by 88 percent. In the humanities, they decreased by 33 percent. In 1966 one student in six left the university with a degree in the humanities. In 1986 the proportion was one in 16. Another statistic shows that approximately 80 percent of American students leave the university without ever having taken a course in Western civilization, American history, or a foreign language. There can be no doubt that the relative importance of the humanities in institutions of higher learning has diminished.

Cheney's report proposes a number of explanations for this phenomenon, two of which seem to have important ideological implications: the specialization of humanistic studies and the particularization of humanistic studies. Excessive specialization, of course, is a tendency that affects all academic disciplines. It is owed to the increase in the amount of knowledge that must be absorbed, and to the natural penchant of specialists to lock themselves up in what they know best. But it turns out to be particularly damaging in the fields of the humanities, for specialists in its different disciplines no longer understand one other; and they are not understood by the public at large. (Cheney, like many others, finds some hilarious examples of unintelligible jargon.) This brings to mind the recent occasion when a fine critic, speaking about the very serious issue of race and literature, wondered aloud, "Was I talking to white critics, black critics, or myself? Well, all of the above," and never paused to consider the possibility that she might be addressing people who are not critics at all.

As for particularization, it is discernible both in the point of view (or "method") adopted by scholars and in the choice of subjects to be studied. The point of view is explicitly antiuniversalist, presenting itself as the political expression of a specific group. The subjects dealt with (especially in "Western Civilization" courses) are no longer drawn from what was hitherto thought of as an irreplaceable "canon," the masterpieces of Western literature and philosophy. Instead, reading lists vary according to the tastes of individual professors, not to say individual students. Dispersion has replaced continuity; at Stanford, a mere six European celebrities have survived the war against the canon.

Unlike the prosecution, the defense of the humanities has been argued essentially by those directly involved, by professors of literature, history, and philosophy. This division of roles is unfortunate. When the attacks come preponderantly from the outside and the defenses from the inside, distortions are unavoidable. The "outsiders" will automatically be suspected of incompetence or envy; and the "insiders," who must, after all, protect their interests, will be suspected of a plea *pro domo suo*. Something is rotten in our state if society no longer wants to listen to its intellectuals, and if intellectuals cannot bear to hear how they are judged by society. (In the recent de Man affair, for example, several academics complained about the press's interference in their business.)

To illustrate the arguments of the defense, I will make use of a pamphlet recently published by the American Council of Learned Societies, titled *Speaking for the Humanities*. I choose it not because it is particularly convincing (I don't think it is), but because it is undoubtedly representative, having been signed by the heads of the Humanities Centers of five major universities (Rutgers, Yale, Cornell, Harvard, and Stony Brook), and endorsed by 21 other prestigious practitioners of the humanities.

Almost everything is grist for the mill of the defense. It starts out by contesting the figures that establish the decline of

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the humanities, but it does so in a way that is itself somewhat contestable, by merely providing a few isolated examples that appear to illustrate the opposite of a decline. ("In Rutgers University, to take one example, there was no decline in English majors through the whole period.") It goes on to admit the existence of such a decline, but attributes it to factors outside the universities: to the evolution of the world economy and American society. ("Change in curriculum as well as changes in the social and moral structure of our society . . . reflect America's changing position in the world economic community or the emergence of non-Western powers on the world scene." Blame this, too, on the Japanese?) There is doubtless some truth in this, but it hardly absolves members of the scholarly community of all responsibility. Anyway, it is always advisable to begin by sweeping before one's own door.

Finally the authors of the ACLS pamphlet do get around to the internal evolution of the humanities, and suggest alternative responses to the questions raised by the Cheney report. Against the charge of excessive specialization, the authors of *Speaking for the Humanities* resort to the "logic of the kettle." (Rebuked for having returned a kettle with a hole in it, the borrower responds, first, that he never borrowed it; second, that when he borrowed it there was already a hole in it; and third, that he returned it intact.) First, it is not true that in the profession of the humanities a high value is placed on specialization. "Far from revering narrow specialists, teachers of the humanities particularly value the work of thinkers in other fields who succeed in speaking to them across fields." Second, specialization is indeed a prevalent value, but it must remain so: it is the condition sine qua non for progress in each field. "Research must be specialized. Since it consists of learning more than is already known about a topic, it must focus its efforts specifically and intensely, in uncommon fashion, to make progress." Third, specialization is indeed present, and does indeed have negative effects, and it can best be combatted by just the interdisciplinary centers of which the authors are in charge.

This jumble of competing arguments hardly flatters the work accomplished in those centers—but the arguments must, of course, be examined on their own merits. The idyllic situation suggested by the first defense seems to me a far cry from reality: it is a fact that the articles published by specialized journals are, generally speaking, incomprehensible, or of no interest, to a lay public. To be sure, there are exceptions. But is it

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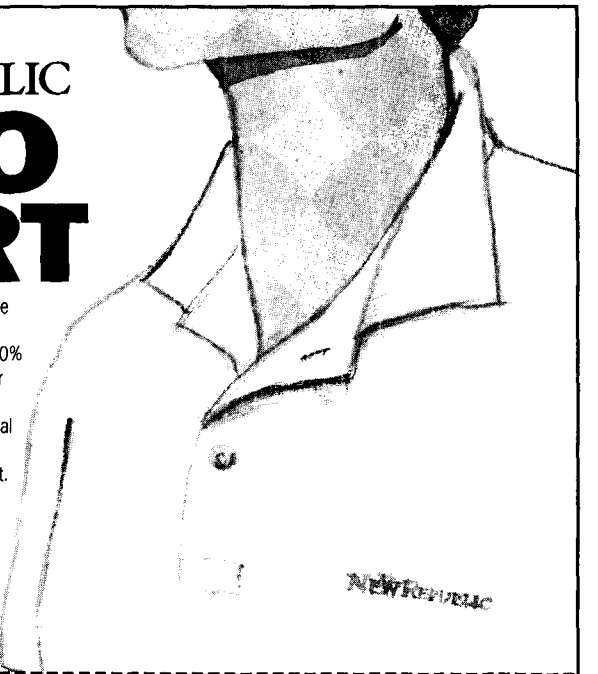

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not significant that, of the five examples of authors speaking "across fields" cited by *Speaking for the Humanities*, three are French academics (Claude Lévi-Strauss, Michel Foucault, and Julia Kristeva), one a specialist of social sciences rather than the humanities (Clifford Geertz), and only one an American philosopher (Stanley Cavell)? A more judicious choice might have been made, but it would not have altered the general picture.

Specialization is necessary, say the defenders; but they seem to be confusing two meanings of "specialization," mistaking the competence of scholars for the lack of general interest elicited by their work. Going even further, they declare that "specialization makes thought possible." This is an outrageous claim. It implies, among other things, that outside of universities people do not think. (But this is consistent with the elitism elsewhere in the defense: such-and-such a book is "disturbingly popular," problems are inevitably "more complicated than the popular interpretation allows.")

To justify this stance, we are given an analogy with the natural sciences. "We do not expect physicists to work within their disciplines only in language that non-physicists might comprehend." Is there really no difference, however, between literary history and physics? And might not this false analogy itself be one of the causes of excessive specialization within the humanities? Unlike physicists or geologists, historians and philosophers study objects that are of the same nature as themselves and their fellow creatures, namely human beings; and this difference has consequences for the product of their research itself.

Obviously knowledge of the object is one of the features of humanistic research. In this respect, there can be no such thing as too much "specialization." Indeed, from this point of view, contemporary humanists are not specialized enough. Since they need to publish as fast and as widely as possible in order to get tenure, their profession itself often prevents them from broadening their command of their field. (Learning history is, after all, a slower process than learning physics.) But the humanities have still another indispensable feature that distinguishes them from the natural sciences. They attempt to further the good of the human community in which they live, and even of humanity as a whole. Of course, this kind of goal may also play a role in the motivation of specialists of the physical sciences (they may study atom fission so as to manufacture an atom bomb before Hitler, or analyze the human genetic code to fight cancer). But such an engagement with the human community concerns only the motivations that precede research, and the applications of the results once they have been found; the scientific exploration itself must be completely independent of such an imperative.

The relevant distinction is not between "specialists" and "belle-lettristes" in pursuit of a "generally ideal" (as the counsel for the defense wishes to believe), but rather between those specialists who refuse to budge from their object and those who prefer not to lose sight of the interests of the individual or the community. The latter perspective, of course, does not replace the search for knowledge itself (if it did, scholars would rapidly be evicted by preachers or political activists); and it need not be evident at each and every stage of the process of inquiry. But it must be constantly present as the ultimate horizon of research, on pain of transforming the humanities into pure scholasticism.

Those who have not lost sight of this horizon can be recognized by their constant effort to avoid obscurity of language, by the pains they take to make themselves comprehensible to all those who, without having followed the same academic itinerary, take an active interest in the results of their research. Being accessible to non-specialists does not require sacrificing the quality of the work itself. Freud is read far beyond the circle of psychoanalysts.

The social sciences are no less deserving of this reproach than the humanities. Bruno Bettelheim recalls somewhat wryly that he was obliged, as a writer starting out in his field, to "dress up" his work as a concentration camp survivor in the then-popular vocabulary of the social sciences; later on, his renown spared him from having to surrender to such demands. More recently, Oliver Sacks advocated the return to narrative as a legitimate form of expression in the social sciences, because it better preserves the complexity of the object observed and because it allows better communication of one's thought. Thus, it is up to each specialist to discover the peculiar balance in his or her work between the knowledge of the object and the interest that the community might take in this knowledge. The proliferation of interdisciplinary centers—a typically bureaucratic response to a fundamentally intellectual problem—may not be harmful, but in itself it resolves nothing.

The defenders proceed next to the charge of excessive particularization. First, about the question of method: Is it true that specific political viewpoints have taken the place of good old universalism? The response offered by *Speaking for the Humanities* is, it must be said, particularly dogmatic. The authors gladly confess to the crime of which they are accused. They explain that there is no such thing as truth or objectivity, that there are only points of view and particular interests. "Interests generate thought and ideological assumptions govern the most self-evident truth." And, "[Ideology] delude[s] us into promoting as universal values that in fact belong to one nation, one social class, one sect." And, "Once we try to think the choices through we find ourselves in the kind of fundamental questions about standpoint, cultural difference, aesthetic, moral and political values that belie universalist claims and assertions of utter disinterest." And, "Claims of disinterest, objectivity, and universality are not to be trusted and themselves tend to reflect local historical conditions."

All claims to universality arise, in other words, from naive illusion or perfidious deception. This has the result that the arguments of the defense are asserted with ever increasing rigidity, with the authority of power: "The consensus of most of the dominant theories is . . . ," "the most distinguished philosophers of science of our time [claim] . . . ," "the most powerful modern philosophies and theories have been demonstrating . . . ," "much of what most matters in modern thought challenges claims to universality," and so forth. Since there is no difference between right and might, it is just as well to be on the side of might. This is awkwardly reminiscent of O'Brien's speech in *1984*: "You believe that reality is something objective, external, existing in its own right. . . . But I tell you, Winston, that reality is not external. Reality exists in the human mind, and nowhere else."

Intentionally or not, *Speaking for the Humanities* confuses two propositions, the first banal and the second highly debatable. It is true that every idea is born at a given time and in a given situation. It is also true that, at the time of its birth, every idea is connected to specific motives. Still, what is true about its origins does not apply to its meaning, or to its implications. All those who have aspired to a more than local truth are not idiots or swindlers. To believe that ideas are wholly dependent on the motives that gave rise to them is to take us back to the mechanical oversimplifications of Helvétius, the 18th-century French materialist who believed that "good" is just another name we give to what is agreeable to us.

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The distinctive trait of human beings is not only to have specific motives, but to be capable of surmounting them. Everyone (except Callicles) knows the difference between what is advantageous and what is just. The fact that algebra was discovered by the Arabs does not make it any less true in China. The fact that declarations of human rights were drawn up in Europe does not mean these rights need not be respected in South Africa. And the possibility of consensus, the aspiration to universality, is obviously much closer to the democratic ideal than are the philosophies that present the world as given over to irreducible interests, to a war among races, nations, classes, or sexes.

The very frequency with which authoritative voices are invoked in the ACLS pamphlet suggests that its authors are betting on the ignorance of their readers. Yet it is not true that all "dominant," "distinguished," and "powerful" professors agree on these matters. The cognitive and moral relativism at the basis of this doctrine proceeds from Nietzsche or, differently, from Marx. A great many thinkers take exception to this "consensus." There are those who propound a dogmatic truth (Christian thinkers, for example, but also, from a different angle, the Marxists themselves). And there are those who maintain that truth is neither a dogma nor a chimera, that it is, rather, the horizon of dialogue, the regulating principle of exchange (these thinkers range from Kant to Habermas and beyond). Eliminating such disagreements out of hand hardly instantiates the "pluralism" of which the authors of *Speaking for the Humanities* boast. It is proof only of their uniformity. They seem to practice dogmatic skepticism.

Finally, of course, there is the question of the canon. The issues raised by the National Endowment report and the ACLS pamphlet have been debated concretely in the curriculum controversies at Stanford and elsewhere. Having come under pressure from the university's Black Student Union and the Faculty Task Force, and from a campus demonstration conducted by Jesse Jackson to the tune of "Hey, hey, ho, ho, Western culture's got to go," Stanford's mandatory "Western Civilization" course was replaced by a course with the rather neutral title of "Cultures, Ideas, Values." As far as I can tell, the vehemence of the debate arises from the fact that several issues, all of them important ones, have been conflated into the single question of the canon. It is essential, however, that they be carefully separated and clarified.

First, all human beings are born within a particular culture—fortunately for them. We are not required to organize the totality of our experiences from scratch, which would be an exhausting task. Through the language and the traditions of our group, we learn the organization proper to our culture. And there is no such thing as a "universal culture"; we always begin by observing the universe through lenses tinted by a particular culture.

Without this mastery of part of the collective memory, we should be condemned to non-communication. Modern life, which has destroyed many of the traditional channels of transmission, threatens individuals with a hitherto unknown infirmity: deculturation. Attempts have been made to compensate for the channels destroyed by creating new ones; education is one of them. It is perfectly natural that the tradition one first acquires be that of the country in which one lives: perfectly natural, therefore, that Americans should master the American tradition.

Second, places such as North and South America, Australia, and so on, in which most inhabitants are more or less recent immigrants, raise a problem unknown in France or Germany: Of what does their tradition consist, apart from the period of their lives they have spent on this particular territory? It would seem logical to take into account the origins of the institutions or the concepts that have presided over public debate, and not only the origins of individual inhabitants. This may not always be a valid criterion, or an exclusive one; but it is the only sense in which European traditions can be said to be more relevant to the history of the United States than, say, African ones, or Christianity more relevant than Islam. (Even this "more" is relative, and needs to be shored up by historical demonstration.)

To justify the European affiliation by declaring, along with Saul Bellow, that one does not know of "the Tolstoy of the Zulus, the Proust of the Papuans"—to set up that sort of hierarchy of values—makes about as much sense in this context as to say one does not know the European equivalents of Zulu painters. Traditions are historical facts, not Olympic Games. Lady Murasaki's *Tale of Genji* may be a greater work than Madame de Lafayette's *La Princesse des Clèves*, but if I am to study French culture, I should read the latter, not the former. That Zulu literature's forte is not the realistic novel, moreover, seems hardly a reason for condemning it.

Third, is the Western tradition really "racist, sexist, and imperialist," as its detractors claim? Or is it universalist, toler-

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ant, and critical, as its defenders protest? The answer, of course, is that it is both. There is more than one "Western tradition." Racism, sexism, and imperialism have been practiced by some and combatted by others; nothing could be more obvious. Every truly rich tradition can be said to encompass different, even contradictory, schools of thought.

While it might be desirable that all students have at least some familiarity with "Western tradition," therefore, it is absurd to impose the same six or 15 or 100 books on every student in every university. The Western tradition is itself infinitely more various than any reading list. Like all great traditions, it is at once idiosyncratic and universal. Studying a wide variety of texts within this tradition only enhances these qualities.

Fourth, does the fact that most authors of the Western tradition are men, white, and members of the privileged classes imply that the content of their works can be summed up as a defense of the white male elite? Are all whites racist, all men sexist, and so forth? To believe that they are would be to adhere totally to the idea that "being determines consciousness." It is itself a racist way of thinking, since it implies that the color of your skin decides the content of your thought (and so all blacks think alike, as do all whites), and sexist, and elitist.

All theories which claim that interest alone determines the orientation of one's ideas lead to the same impasse. If they were true, the opposition to the suggested changes in the curriculum would be all the more legitimate: Why struggle for the advancement of women if it automatically entails the oppression of men, or for that of blacks if it must bring about the subordination of whites? But this, of course, is ridiculous. The fact that an author is white and male does not allow us to predict exactly what he thinks. There is no contradiction between the necessarily historical context in which a work is created and its greater or lesser universality. In this sense, Cheney is wrong to accuse the humanities of introducing a political perspective into works that formerly had none. It is at the moment of their creation that works are the most political and the most particular. But we also have the right to ask what they mean to us, above and beyond the circumstances in which they were created.

Fifth, should professors agree with the authors they teach? A positive response to this question would tragically impoverish university education. Its effect would be to falsify the tradition, preserving only those parts of it that rub us the right way, and to orient teaching toward the inculcation of the good. It can be more useful to analyze authors with whom the professor and/or the students disagree. Far better to understand why *Gargantua* is sexist and *Huckleberry Finn* is racist than to strike them from the reading list. Moreover, it is vital to distinguish between the power of an idea and its rightness (according to present-day opinion), and to hold the former in higher esteem than the latter for the education of the mind. The fact that Plato is anti-democratic does not make him less stimulating than a contemporary Social-Democrat.

Finally, whatever conservatives and nihilists may think, the canon is neither totally immutable nor totally malleable. Only our habit of locking ourselves into Manichaean alternatives makes it so difficult to describe. The canon is characterized by both continuity and incessant transformation. We might recall that Vermeer, now held by many to be the greatest painter of the Western world, did not appear in any art catalog 150 years ago. One could hardly say that with the rise in his prestige the canon of European painting has ceased to exist. The canon does not require unanimity, either; merely a relative majority. In each period a minority prefers writers, painters, or philosophers who are not the majority's choice (today they prefer Swedenborg to Marx, or Simone Weil to Simone de Beauvoir); and there is no reason to deplore this state of affairs.

The goal of a humanist, liberal education is to form minds that are simultaneously tolerant and critical. The method employed to attain this goal is the mastery of a specific tradition: no path leads to the universal except through the particular. If, however, the "means" are left entirely up to individual professors or students, rather than to the faculty of each university as a whole, the "end" has a good chance of being dogmatic; for if students cannot situate themselves with respect to a tradition, they are liable to accept as truth the prejudices of their own time.

To "decenter" our viewpoints, to break free from egocentric and ethnocentric illusions, we must learn to become detached from ourselves, to see our own habits from the outside. There is only one way to achieve this: by confronting our norms with those of other people, by discovering that they, too, are legitimate. (This does not mean renouncing all value judgments: tyranny is despicable in every climate.) Thus it is crucial to study not only our own history, but also other cultures—not in order to contribute to some mythical "universal culture" obtained by the juxtaposition of masterpieces divorced from their respective contexts, but in order to convince ourselves there is more than one way of being human. In this sense, the curriculum changes implemented at Stanford would seem to be a step backward. It is easily conceivable that immersion in a foreign culture (Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Arab, or black African) would help to extract American students from the provincialism that characterizes children of a great (and therefore overbearing) nation.

It may be objected that these are unrealistic demands. Universities have already cut down on their humanities curricula, and it may be unlikely that they would simultaneously preserve the "Western Civ" courses and throw in a few non-Western civs as well. Yet the costs are worth bearing if we want our academic institutions to produce not merely better experts, but better citizens, and even better human beings.

The Secrets of Philosophy

BY CHARLES LARMORE

The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism
Essays and Lectures by Leo Strauss
selected and introduced by Thomas L. Pangle

(University of Chicago Press, 286 pp., $45, $14.95 paper)

Thomas Pangle begins by asking, in his introduction to this collection of essays by Leo Strauss, "What is it about his writings that continues to shatter respectable intellectual categories and rules, thereby arousing so much fascination and so much hatred?" The question is not easy to answer. Certainly Strauss was a controversial figure in political philosophy, not least since his death in 1973. His former students

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(the most famous is Allan Bloom) guard his memory and his teaching vigilantly. His opponents not only disagree with particular points of his scholarship, but often suggest some dangerous flaw in the character of his mind. Again, why? What prejudices or certainties did he assail?

At the heart of Strauss's thinking, as Pangle observes, lay the conviction that there is such a thing as moral truth. In itself, however, this is surely an unlikely spark for the passionate debates that swirl around him. The opposite view, that morality is an expression of group ideology or individual preference, has indeed become a common routine of thought; but Strauss was hardly alone in this century in his defense of the possibility of moral knowledge, and the others have not provoked such extreme reactions. The reasons for Strauss's power to enthrall and to repel must lie elsewhere.

The key, I think, is the peculiar urgency and direction of Strauss's search for moral truth. Modern thought seemed to him morally disastrous from beginning to end. His message, put simply, was that only a return to the ancients can save us. These are sweeping verdicts, and to understand what he meant by them we must look at the development of his thought.

Strauss was born in 1899 in Kirchhain, Germany. Raised an Orthodox Jew, he developed a considerable interest in medieval Jewish thought and in Spinoza. He studied philosophy at a number of German universities, and worked at the Academy of Jewish Research in Berlin. After leaving Germany in 1932, Strauss spent most of the rest of his life teaching political philosophy in American universities. As a result, his renown is largely confined to America. (There are now some signs of interest in France.) But the roots of his thought go back to the period before his emigration.

The best account of his deepest concerns remains the intellectual autobiography he composed, in 1965, as a preface to the American translation of his book *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*. There he described his plight as a Jewish intellectual in Weimar Germany. The liberal ideals of the Enlightenment seemed to him, as to many Germans, hollow or unjustified. The doctrine of moral progress, championed at the turn of the century by Hermann Cohen, the great neo-Kantian philosopher and the intellectual leader of the German Jewish community, seemed decisively refuted by the World War and the rise of fascism. Moreover, the irrationalism of Nietzsche and Heidegger seemed to have resulted from the very basis of modern thought. Once the source of value was no longer thought to lie in the cosmos or in God, but was cast instead into the flux of history, the question of how we ought to live seemed bound to become a matter of human will, not human reason.

Strauss studied with Heidegger for a year in the 1920s, and was immensely impressed by the passion and profundity with which he criticized modern conceptions of reason. (Later he called him "the only great thinker in our time.") But he never accepted Heidegger's ugly political conclusions. Liberal values of freedom and equality, even if they appeared baseless philosophically, were clearly preferable to the totalitarian movements with which the new irrationalism naturally allied itself. How was one to escape a dilemma in which modern philosophy pointed in one direction and common decency in another?

Strauss's book on Spinoza, published in Germany in 1930, offered a solution. The Enlightenment's attack on divine revelation was misconceived, he argued, since reason cannot show the invalidity of a form of thought that itself limits the authority of reason. If the Bible is indeed the word of God, then miracles have occurred. But reason cannot prove the nonexistence of miracles, since all its forms of argument already assume that the course of the world is orderly, never miraculous. And yet Strauss did not return to religious orthodoxy. Another way out began to open.

That opening was first glimpsed, Strauss reports, as he was reviewing a book by Carl Schmitt, the German constitutional theorist who soon became the chief intellectual apologist for the Nazi coup d'état. From Schmitt he realized the need to comprehend the decisive influence of Hobbes's critical thought. In 1936, in exile, he published his famous book on Hobbes. Hobbes had departed from Plato and Aristotle, he argued, by deliberately lowering his sights. Instead of appealing to ancient standards of virtue, Hobbes proposed to understand what social life is, and ought to be, solely in terms of passions and interests. His aim was to replace utopia with efficiency. If standards were lowered, success would be more likely. Thus, a chief theme of Strauss's book was that Hobbes's enthusiasm for the new natural science, far from leading to his novel political thought, was itself fueled by the desire to master the human condition.

The crucial point for Strauss, increasingly stressed in subsequent writings, was that in lowering moral standards, Hobbes had made a choice. In other words, the opposite choice was also possible, then and now. The modern drive for mastery, and the sacrifice of common morality to which it eventually led, could be overcome, he concluded, by a return to the high ancient models that modern thought had chosen to reject.

One obstacle to such a return, however, was the extent to which historical circumstance shaped the content of ancient moral philosophy. This fact seemed readily explained by "historicism," the view that no moral thought can be truly objective, since it expresses only the conventions of its age. Strauss could not be happy with that. He recognized that such relativism is at odds with the idea of moral truth. During the 1940s he devised an alternate explanation, according to which the historically conditioned character of Greek ethics was, in fact, intentional. Wishing to protect themselves, recognizing that their ideals were not perfectly realizable, Plato and Aristotle (as well as their medieval followers) often concealed their own thought by accommodating themselves to the opinions of their contemporaries. What they

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wrote was not precisely what they thought. The same was true of early modern thinkers, he claimed, but for the opposite reason. They wished to hide their apostasy from ancient thought. The moderns' pursuit of attainable goals was meant to make the old technique of caution, "the art of writing," ultimately unnecessary.

Thus was born Strauss's famous doctrine of "esoteric teaching," his view that philosophical texts contain hidden meanings reserved for an elite readership that knows truly how to read. Such a doctrine is easily abused, of course. Strauss himself often indulged in questionable, even preposterous "reading between the lines," as when he claimed that Plato thought the ideal state of *The Republic* was inherently impossible; or that *The Prince* consists of 26, or twice 13, chapters because Machiavelli believed that God was no different than luck; or that Locke was a closet Hobbesian. For such fantastic claims Strauss has been justly ridiculed. Still, it is important to remember the quite serious purpose underlying this doctrine: to defuse the appeal of historicism. Strauss was not opposed to historical understanding, to reconstructing the context of problems to which a past thinker was responding. What he vigorously rejected was the idea that this sort of historical study could ever render the truth or falsity of past theories an idle question.

Plato and Aristotle had believed that there is a moral truth discoverable by reason. This classical rationalism was the route Strauss chose out of the corrupt modernity he saw around him. A stark antithesis between ancient virtue and modern freedom, by which he meant the absence of constraint, became the pivot of his thought.

But Strauss never lost his respect for the authority of revelation. Indeed, Strauss was fond of insisting that the deepest of philosophical problems lies in the conflict between Athens and Jerusalem. By this he meant to underscore not just the intractability of the conflict, but also what classical reason and revelation have in common. Together they stand opposed to the view that there are no moral standards outside the welter of passions and interests. They are both, according to Strauss, antimodern.

Strauss's preface to his book on Spinoza reveals a great deal about the historical context of his thought. Like many Weimar intellectuals, Strauss assumed that the moral irrationalism of Nietzsche and Heidegger was not a local aberration, but the inner destiny of modern philosophy. (The thought that it was, instead, symptomatic of a Germany unable and unwilling to accept modern liberal and democratic ideals seems never to have crossed his mind.) It was a common view that the total success of modern science, plus the utter failure of modern philosophy, had created extraordinarily powerful means unchecked by any rational ends. With Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Hannah Arendt, and Heidegger himself after 1934, Strauss shared the bleak conclusion that modernity is the reign of "instrumental reason," technically efficient and morally irresponsible. For all these thinkers, the history of modern thought has been one of moral decline and the unbridled will to power.

Strauss's view of the problem of ethics was typical of Weimar. His originality lay in the solution he pursued. He did not share the later Heidegger's notion that the seeds of modern decadence had already been planted by Plato. Nor did he believe, with Horkheimer and Adorno, that a return to classical rationalism was intellectually impossible. For Strauss, "classical natural right" stood in total opposition to modern thought, since it testified to reason's ability to rise above historical circumstance and discover moral truth.

Thus, Strauss harbored none of Arendt's nostalgia for the Greek polis. In his eyes, Plato and Aristotle were not paradigms of moral philosophy because of what they said about the polis, which was merely one historical form of life among others. Their eminence derived from their search for a timeless morality. That is why his criticism of modern liberalism differs radically from a form of anti-liberalism popular today; he felt little attraction to the Romantic concern for tradition and community, which many contemporary thinkers have made into a stick with which to beat "liberal individualism." The essential ambition of classical thought, Strauss always argued, was to transcend the sense of belonging, to reason sub specie aeternitatis. For him, Romanticism was part of the modern disease of capitulating to history.

Strauss repeatedly declared his allegiance to modern liberal democracy. Some of the most bitter opposition to Strauss supposes that he rejected such values, that (like Schmitt) he scorned the idea of international justice and longed for the closed society. But this is a misconception, as Pangle properly points out. Strauss did have a poignant sense of the disparity between the ideal and the real, and he stressed the need for moderation. But he never abandoned the belief that political life must be brought, as far as possible, into accord with morality, not raison d'état. As a political form, liberal democracy seemed to him a good approximation to the ideal, something like the "mixed regime" favored by the ancients. What he attacked was only the theory of such liberal arrangements. In his view, modern ethics, unlike ancient thought, cannot provide a viable defense of liberal democracy, since it turns by nature into the glorification of power. It can find no norm loftier than expediency.

Much of Strauss's fascination for his followers springs from his root-and-branch criticism of modern thought. There is a secret thrill in belonging to a lonely band of prophets. But just how plausible is the Straussian critique? In the last essay of Pangle's collection, and at greater length in *Natural Right and History* (1953), Strauss charged that the key feature of modern ethics (or "modern natural right," as he called it), which ultimately condemns it to irrationalism, is "the shift of emphasis from natural duties or obligations to natural rights." Premodern thought had made duties primary; the individual's rights were derived from the duties others owed him. To make rights primary, Strauss wrote, is tantamount to making morality serve pre-existing passions and interests.

For a right, if it is unchecked by a notion of duty, is just a demand to have some desire satisfied. Such a right comes without a persuasive claim that there is moral value in its satisfaction. In short, the modern view, according to Strauss, is that one has a right to something simply because one wants it a lot. Although individuals may restrain their wants for the sake of civil peace, such compromises will be inherently unstable; and no moral blame may attach to the "superman" who casts social decency aside in order to

The Status Quo

The sand is still hot in September
everyone drives to the beach and we float
in our light bodies watching the red ball
roll to the bottom of the sky and the sea
darken and the waves lift us
willingly toward the shore as if
nothing has happened we can go back
to the same life never mind that it's gone
like a road in the desert after a flash flood
like the houses we blew up yesterday

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indulge his exorbitant desires. The modern primacy of individual rights, Strauss insisted, leads straight to Nietzsche.

This conception of morality does fit some modern thinkers (Hobbes, for example), but it by no means fits all. Indeed, the primacy of duties over rights, which Strauss extolled as "premodern," is itself a principle first formulated clearly by Samuel Pufendorf in the 17th century. And Pufendorf was not the only modern to hold that morality is more than just an arrangement by which competing individuals can most efficiently satisfy their various desires. There have been many modern moral philosophers who have taught that the value of morality lies, more deeply, in telling us which forms of life make us more fully human.

Kant is the premier example. Although Strauss often made a point of spurning Hermann Cohen's neo-Kantian faith in moral progress, he had little to say about the heart of Kant's own ethical theory. In *Natural Right and History*, for example, he noted simply that in one passage Kant asked why moral philosophy is called the doctrine of duties and not the doctrine of rights, as though Kant could find no reason not to make rights primary. He failed to mention that *in the very next sentence* Kant used the basic terms of his own theory to defend the traditional view, arguing that we can believe we are free, and therefore entitled to rights, only because we understand ourselves to be bound unconditionally by moral duty. Misleading quotations of this sort are not rare in Strauss's writings. And surely an account of modern ethics that fails to find a central place for Kant cannot convince.

Equally defective is Strauss's picture of the underlying motivation of modern ethical thought. For him, it was a mere choice, a sudden decision to lower standards for the sake of practical success. That is why, in his more fanciful moments, he could imagine that modernity was an option of which ancient thinkers were already aware, and which they wisely declined to take. What is missing is the sense that earlier forms of thought had produced problems that later thinkers were aiming to solve. (Strauss did portray some modern thinkers as trying to solve earlier modern problems, but in his view their solutions only aggravated the catastrophe of modernity.) From Strauss you would never learn that there were fundamental philosophical and religious inadequacies in premodern thought.

That, however, is precisely what a great many modern moralists believed. A century of bloody religious wars, and the growing realization that reasonable people are likely to differ and to disagree about the nature of the good life, led to the search for a core morality that all could affirm. In a way, this search did express a lowering of sights. Glorious but controversial views of the good life would have to be transferred from the domain of common morality to the private sphere. But in the hands of many, this core morality remained a code of duty, not a scheme for license. It was most certainly not motivated by an arrogant plan to master the world, as Strauss supposed. Its appeal lay instead in the conviction that deep disagreements about the good life make it increasingly imperative to focus on the moral bonds that can still tie us together. It is only sensible to assume that this strand of modern ethics, like any current of thought, has its share of weaknesses and mistakes, but Strauss gave us no sound idea of what they are.

By itself, Strauss's failure as a historian does not invalidate his effort to arrive at an objective morality. When we turn to his writing about such a morality, however, we find a curious change of tone. He was no longer bold. He was coy. He had very little to say about the overall shape or content of this morality.

Sometimes he remarked intriguingly that it ought to be called "natural right," not "natural law," since it may not be fully expressible in the form of rules. Sometimes he conceded that it need not have its source in God or the cosmos, though he never budged from the belief that the knowledge of it involves rising above our historical context. Sometimes he asserted that some moral truths (he did not say which ones) are so evident that they cannot be coherently doubted. But generally he viewed moral truth as the remote object of an ongoing quest. Indeed, he often associated his outlook with Socrates' "philosophical skepticism"—convinced that there is an objective moral truth, but not claiming to be in possession of it.

Strauss did little to explain how this skepticism, this primacy of the journey itself, could fill the moral vacuum supposedly left behind by modern thought. Traditionally, moral skeptics have urged conformity to existing custom. But for Strauss that would only play into the hands of "modern historicism." Moreover, it is true, as Strauss declared, that moral skeptics might not deliberately harm anyone, but it is unclear on what basis (other than conformity) they could aim to do good for others.

The really important question is why Strauss ended up with so little to say. My own view is that he inadvertently disarmed himself. The wholesale condemnation of modern thought, plus the idea that reason requires us to transcend our historical circumstances, stripped him of the resources for coming to any conclusions about moral truth. He stood back from so much that he had nothing left to go on. Transcendence, of course, is a far less peculiar notion than the bankruptcy of modernity; many philosophers through the ages have supposed that thought becomes objective only when we peel off what history has made us and look at the world from the standpoint of eternity. But this ambition, however widespread, is extravagant. History and reason are not like oil and water. Irrationalism and transcendence are not the sole alternatives.

Typically we can show that some belief is true only by relying upon other beliefs, which we have in large part received from earlier thought, and which we have found (so far) no positive reason to doubt. That does not mean that the historical context of beliefs, from which we reason, holds any guarantee that we will reach the truth. Nor does it mean that for the sake of argument we merely decide to assume these beliefs, without thinking them to be true. The point is not historicism. The point is, rather, as Wittgenstein once observed, to begin at the beginning and not earlier. We always begin reasoning already in the possession of many beliefs. Just as we need a good reason to accept a belief we do not yet have, so we need a good reason to question a belief we already hold. The mere fact that we hold a belief because of our place in history is not a reason to think it is false. Nothing in the idea of reason implies that we should aim to rise above history.

Strauss deployed a number of sound arguments against some of the usual "positivist" ways of denying the possibility of moral knowledge. He argued (1) that the mere fact that people disagree about what is morally correct does not entail that there is no truth of the matter; (2) that occasionally irresolvable conflict between some moral values does not mean that all of morality is impervious to reason; (3) that the fact that no Ought can be derived from an Is does not rule out reasoning about values directly. And yet none of these negative arguments proves that the only way to acquire moral knowledge is to stand back altogether from our moment in history. To most philosophers, reason in the sciences now seems a matter of how we build on what we have inherited, and not of beginning from scratch. He made demands of moral thought that go beyond

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what science itself can satisfy. It is no wonder he came up empty-handed.

If earlier thinkers, aspiring, like Strauss, to transcendence, did arrive at results, that is because (as historical studies show) they complied with that ideal far less consistently than he did. They relied, even if implicitly, on a battery of inherited moral beliefs. That was something he felt he could not possibly do. Strauss was a thinker of great learning and conviction, but his vision, historical and philosophical, was fundamentally flawed. He will continue to have faithful followers as long as the vogue of modernity-bashing lasts. They, too, will promise much and deliver little.

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The Godfather

BY ITAMAR RABINOVICH

Asad: The Struggle for the Middle East by Patrick Seale

(University of California Press, 552 pp., $25)

Michel Seurat was a French academic who wrote on the modern Middle East, with a particular interest in Islamic movements in Syria and Lebanon. In 1985 Seurat was kidnapped in Beirut by the Islamic jihad. He was not a healthy man, and apparently he died in captivity. In March 1986 his captors announced his "execution." A few months later, in June 1986, the French journal *Esprit* published a tribute to Seurat and to his work, appending a bibliography of his works. It noted that three of the titles in the list, which dealt with the unsavory reality of Syrian politics in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and specifically with the sensitive subject of internecine Muslim conflict in Asad's Syria, had been published under a pseudonym. *Esprit* soon received an angry letter from several of Seurat's friends and colleagues. They deplored the editor's decision to expose the fact that these essays uncomplimentary to "certain existing regimes" had been written by a man who knew very well why he chose to disguise his real identity. Their reason was simple: in June 1986 it was not certain whether Seurat was alive or dead, whether he was still in the hands of a group given to some degree of Syrian influence.

Syria's rulers are probably not readers of *Esprit*, but Seurat's tragic death puts into stark relief some of the difficulties involved in researching and writing about the politics of a country like Syria. It can be done from a safe distance, on the basis of written sources—without access, without risks, without obligations. Or it can be done in Seurat's way—with access to Syria and Syrians, and from a critical perspective. Or it can be done in Patrick Seale's way.

Seale's attempt to decipher Asad's personality, and to chronicle his personal career and the evolution of his regime, is the most ambitious book in recent years on Syria's modern history. Seale came to the task with promising credentials. He is the author of *The Struggle for Syria*, published in 1965 and still considered the standard book of Syrian history for the crucial period between 1945 and 1958. He continued to write on Syrian politics and policies as a journalist in London who was very well informed and very sympathetic to Asad and the Ba'th regime.

In the writing of Asad's biography, Seale was given unusual access. There were long interviews with Asad himself, and with many of his associates. The benefits of this access are evident in Seale's opening chapters, which provide the first full account of Asad's family background, youth, and early career. It is well written, new, and intriguing. But the price of access is evident in the rest of the book, beginning with Asad's emergence as a senior figure in Syrian politics in the 1960s. Seale's last two lines are: "In the meantime, when asked how he would like this chronicle to be concluded, Asad replied: 'Say simply that the struggle continues.'" Critical biographers do not normally consult the subjects of their work for the message they would like to transmit.

Seale is not a blind admirer of Asad, or only an apologist for him. His book is sometimes mildly critical of its subject, candid about the unattractive aspects of his personality and his regime. Except for these passages, however, the biography would have lost all credibility. For the critical voice is heavily outweighed, almost completely overwhelmed, by an account of events favorable to Asad.

Hafiz al-Asad has ruled Syria since November 1970. He is a man of remarkable achievements. He gave Syria, a state proverbial for instability, its first durable and effective regime. Building on his domestic success, he transformed his country from a weak state, a passive object buffeted by the ambitions of powerful neighbors and external powers, into a regional force in the Middle East. While he was not fully successful in his drive to become the arbiter of Arab politics and the key to the affairs of his region, Asad did demonstrate on several occasions in the 1970s and 1980s that his central role in its affairs had to be acknowledged. His acquisition of a hegemonic role in Lebanon in 1976, his obstruction of Jimmy Carter's policies in 1977, and his defeat of American and Israeli policies in Lebanon in 1982-84 were the most notable examples of his success beyond his borders.

Asad's stature and reputation rose accordingly. In his memoirs, Henry Kissinger did a great deal to enhance Asad's image. Kissinger's detailed and intriguing chronicle of the negotiations that led to the signing of the Syrian-Israeli Disengagement Agreement of May-June 1974 portrayed Asad as a leader who combined toughness and a deeply entrenched commitment to Arab nationalism with tactical flexibility and personal charm. His fascination with Asad's personality and political style comes through clearly.

Similarly, Jimmy Carter has described his own enchantment with a man he found "somewhat haughty in our first few minutes together," but who subsequently turned out to be "quite gracious, completely relaxed, humorous in his remarks and extremely interested in my efforts to arrange peace negotiations." And the Asad mystique was also promoted in writing aimed at a rather different readership. In his book *La Paix manquée* and in newspaper articles, the Lebanese politician Karim Pakradouni, a seasoned emissary to Damascus impressed by Asad's successes in Lebanon in the mid-1980s, depicted an "Arab Bismarck" brilliantly calculating and carefully executing strategies with tenacity and flexibility. His work was eagerly read and received.

As the ruler of a powerful Arab state, commanding a large and sophisticated military machine, as the Soviet Union's most important ally in the Middle East, as the hegemonic external power in Lebanon, as the challenger of the pragmatic

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Arab line toward Israel, and as an actor in Palestinian politics, Asad personally holds some of the keys to war and peace in the Middle East. Whether Syria does or does not enjoy strategic parity with Israel is debatable; but there is no debating the fact that Asad alone will make strategic decisions on Syria's behalf. Against this background, the reliability of the most ambitious chronicle of Asad's career and character assumes a particular importance.

Seale's glowing picture is marred, however, by a disturbing, darker side. For Asad's and Syria's achievements have tended to be short-lived, as the discrepancy between his ambitions and his regime's and country's limitations have became apparent. Asad's illness in 1983 and 1984, and the struggle for power and succession that resulted, demonstrated the essential fragility of a regime that finally rests on one man. More important, Asad's political career has been based on a conscious and systematic reliance on force and violence.

What is the nature of the peasant boy from an obscure mountain village who made his way to the top and stayed there? What are Asad's strategic aims? Does he seek Arab leadership? Is he interested in a settlement with Israel, and under what terms? How healthy is he and how stable is his regime now? The answers to these questions arouse more than academic interest. Seale's Asad is a man who became his country's ruler not by design and ambition, but under the impact of events beyond his control.

Here was the gifted son of a modest (but not poor) Alawi peasant family that could afford to send him to high school in nearby Latakia but not to a university. (The Alawis of the Middle East are a small but fierce Muslim sect, syncretic in its beliefs, sometimes associated with Shiism; they constitute about six percent of Syria's population.) The military academy was the one channel for professional education and advancement that was open to Asad, as to many other Alawis of his generation. Like other young Alawis, he was politicized in high school—that is, recruited by the Ba'th Party, which was Arab nationalist, secularist, and socialist. The high rate of Alawi recruitment into both the armed forces and the Ba'th Party was one of the principal factors leading to Alawi domination of the Ba'th regime and Syria since the late 1960s. Seale tells us that Asad originally shared the grievances of a downtrodden minority, but that

> from his teens on he rebelled against this background, threw off his sectarian grudges. . . . Nevertheless, despite his later nationalist credentials the inescapable Alawi label was to be his burden. He had to work hard to convince his skeptical compatriots that he had left minority complexes behind him, had committed himself body and soul to the nationalist mainstream and was indeed fit to lead them.

As a young officer in the Syrian air force of the 1950s, Asad remained active in the Ba'th Party. The party cooperated with Nasser in forming the UAR, the Syrian-Egyptian union. But the partners soon fell out, and Asad, together with many other Ba'thi officers, was sent into virtual exile in Egypt. There a group of Alawi and other minoritarian officers formed the secret cabal that eventually masterminded the coup that brought the Ba'th to power in March 1963. Syrian politics between 1963 and 1970 revolved to a considerable extent around the conflict between that cabal and its various partners, and around the intrigue among the cabal's own members. In February 1966 the cabal got rid of the Ba'th Party's founding fathers in a bloody coup. Subsequently Salah Jadid, the cabal's leader, and the less prominent Hafez al-Asad became locked in a conflict that was finally resolved in November 1970 when Asad staged his "corrective movement" and seized full power in Syria.

Upon seizing power, Asad launched a policy of liberalization. It reflected a genuine desire to effect a reconciliation with his country's urban middle classes—provided, of course, that they accept his regime and their own disfranchisement. But underneath the velvet glove was an iron fist, and it has been used several times during the past 18 years—when political opponents at home and abroad were killed, when the Islamic opposition in Syria was quashed with appalling violence, when Syria introduced its own strain of brutality into the already violent politics of Lebanon.

According to Seale, Palestine and the conflict with Israel have played a crucial role in Asad's life. After the defeat of 1948, "facing up to the militant Jewish nationalism became the most urgent and daunting of concerns. From then on the contest with Zionism became th or theme of Asad's life." In the s Seale writes that "the defe t o the decisive turning poi ing him into politic ring him to rule Syria straints of colleagues d riva the June war, he w As. impress others as be His main asset was arouse the suspicions It was only in the war's wa as a result of Salah Jadid's to turn him, as minister of def scapegoat, that "Asad'

gave way to something more steely, and it was from this time on that he set about in earnest building a personal power base in the armed service." As for the 1967 war itself, Seale suggests ridiculously that it was very much the result of the sinister activity of an ill-defined group of "Israeli activists" who took full advantage of the inexperience and hotheadedness of Syria's young rulers—"in baiting Syria, their real aim was to destroy Nasser."

Asad, in any event, survived the debacle, and went on to become Syria's master in 1970. The regime he established was built on a double foundation: an informal network of control and a formal system of party and state institutions united at the top by Asad's person and leadership. By the mid-1970s, Asad had taken a comparatively stable and powerful Syria through the October War into a position of unprecedented regional eminence, proof of which was most vividly and violently given by Syria's hegemony in Lebanon. But three years later everything seemed to collapse. Asad's foreign policy looked like a series of dead ends, while at home he faced a severe challenge by the radical Muslim opposition.

In Seale's account of Asad's early success and subsequent setbacks, Israel is joined by three other bêtes noires as the sinister spoilers, the foes who afflict Asad's life and brutalize his regime: Henry Kissinger, Anwar Sadat, and the Syrian opposition. It was Kissinger, writes Seale, who "wove a thread of tragedy into Asad's life. A political career which until then had been largely optimistic grew somber as, with the collapse of his hopes for an honorable postwar settlement, Asad's world became a hostile place." Again and again Seale suggests that Kissinger, a man who suffered from "a psychological block shared by many Jews," and whose views were "indistinguishable from those of Israeli hardliners," conducted a Middle Eastern policy designed to serve Israeli rather than America's interests. Thus, according to Seale, he misled Asad in the negotiations of 1974 and 1975, and then again when he tricked him into intervening in Lebanon. This last exploit is described by Seale as a "characteristically Byzantine scheme."

Sadat is another villain in Seale's story. He, too, deceived Asad. The innocent Asad of the early 1970s, he states, "appears to have been outclassed in deviousness by Sadat and Hussein." In their joint preparations for the war of 1973, Sadat, according to Seale, duped Asad. Egypt's military planners showed their Syrian counterparts plans for an ambi-

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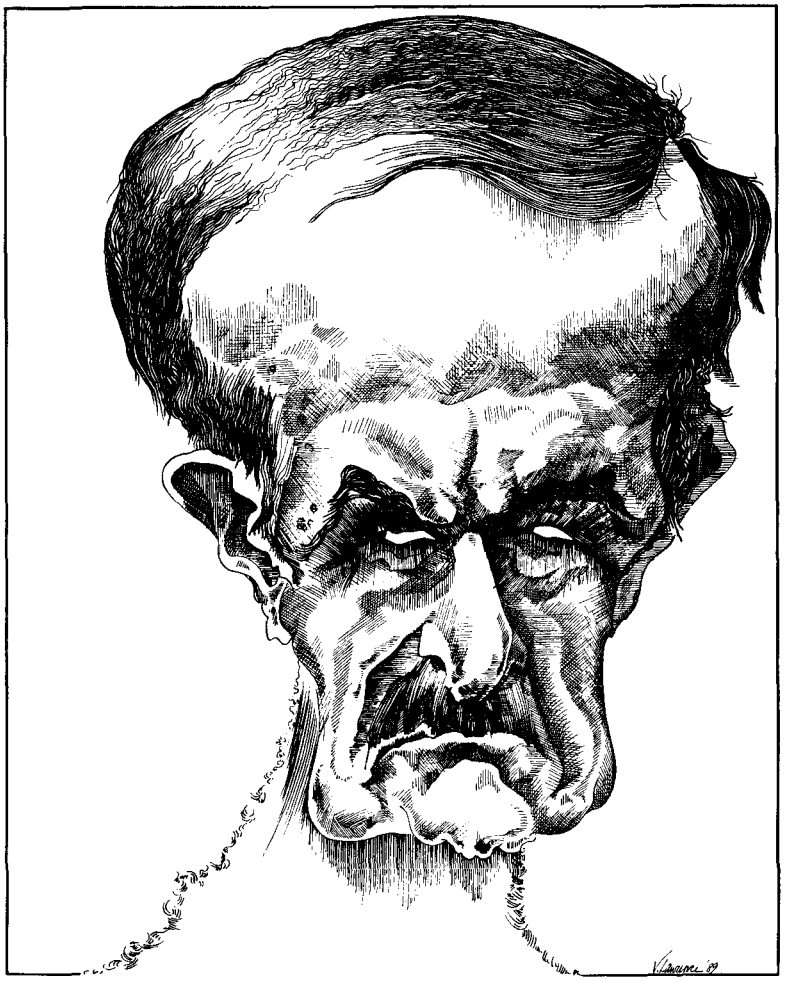
tious crossing of the Suez Canal and a dramatic move toward the Mitla and Gidi passes, but in fact a more modest plan was prepared, which took the Egyptian army across the Canal and left it there in stationary positions. Consequently Israel was able to concentrate enough forces in the Golan to push back the Syrian offensive and advance toward Damascus. And it was the same Sadat who concluded the war without consulting his Syrian partner, rushed to negotiate with Israel, signed the interim agreement in 1975, and made his spectacular journey to Jerusalem in 1977.

Inside Syria, it was the radical Islamic opposition that presented Asad with a challenge that nearly toppled his regime. The opposition was quashed in 1980 and again, in Hama, in 1982. Seale is uncharitable with Asad's enemies. One of them, Salah al-Bitar, a co-founder of the Ba'th Party, was assassinated in Paris in 1979. Bitar, he tells us, attacked Asad and his regime on the pages of his newspaper, lobbied against them in Saudi Arabia, and "with other fading names from the past [became] a rallying point for widely different strands of the Syrian opposition. For a moment it must have seemed that Bitar could present a real danger and some such fear may have contributed to the decision to put an end to him."

A new threat developed in November 1983, when Asad suffered a severe heart attack. Seale says that "although the specialists detected some irregularity in his heart beat they could find nothing organically wrong with him. . . . The real cause of his collapse was exhaustion. . . . Asad spent over two weeks in hospital before moving to a private villa for a month's convalescence." Asad's illness produced great tensions in the regime's upper echelons, most significantly a struggle for power between Asad and his brother Rifat, who until then was considered the most vital (if problematic) cog in the intricate control and security system built by Asad over the years.

It took Asad well over a year to convalesce, reassert his control, and strip his brother of power. But a series of incidents in 1986 raised questions as to whether his illness and the internecine squabbling had resulted in a loss of control over Syria's extensive intelligence network. The most prominent incident was an abortive attempt by Nizar Hindawi, a Jordanian, to plant a bomb aboard an El Al plane at Heathrow Airport in April 1986. Hindawi was discovered, arrested, and subsequently sentenced to 45 years in jail. His interrogation and trial exposed the fact that the Syrian Embassy was directly—and rather clumsily—involved in the affair. Britain severed diplomatic relations with Syria, and the United States and other Western countries imposed milder sanctions.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Seale agrees that "a Syrian agency, most probably General Khouly's air force intelligence, was involved." But it seems to him "equally certain that President Asad, as well as his prime minister and the rest of the government, knew nothing about the operation until they heard about it over the radio." To Seale this suggests that "Syrian intelligence . . . was not under tight enough political control. Random atrocities were not in Asad's style. . . . Asad was not in the business of national suicide."

But Seale goes further. Hindawi, he argues, "was most probably an *agent provocateur* whose mission was to entrap the Syrian intelligence services so as to smear Syria as a terrorist state. He appeared to be the instrument for an Israeli penetration of Syrian intelligence." The larger political context of the trap, as Asad himself explained to his biographer, was that "his enemies wanted to bring him down in order to complete Israel's unfinished business in Lebanon and allow an Israel-Jordan deal to go forward." Seale explains in greater detail how vital it seemed to Shimon Peres to weaken Asad in order to facilitate a Jordanian-Israeli agreement, the major goal of his policy as Israel's prime minister in 1984-86. "Peres in his courtship of Hussein strove to blacken Asad and get him out of the way."

This treatment of the Hindawi affair is typical of what is wrong with Seale's book. The uninformed reader might be taken in by the suggestive style, by the mass of details, by the extensive footnotes. But the informed reader's trust is stretched beyond the breaking point. Would Israel, of its own free will, stage an operation and kill innocent people, many of them Israelis, to demonstrate to the world how dangerous it was to board a plane to Israel? Would Hindawi cooperate with Israelis in the execution of an intricate plot designed to land him in a British prison? A more likely explanation for Syria's role in the Hindawi bombing is that the success of similar methods in Lebanon between 1982 and 1985 led to a larger strategy of reliance on terrorism against its enemies in the international arena.

And what about other operations staged at the same time? Seale mentions Abu Nidal's operations in Rome, Vienna, Karachi, and Istanbul, and proceeds to make light of Abu Nidal's association with Syria. ("They continued to make use of some Syrian facilities . . . in mounting rogue operations which Asad had not authorized.") He fails to mention, however, another bungled attempt,

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this one in Madrid, this one by Abu Musa's organization, the Palestinian group that rebelled against Arafat and since 1983 has been a virtual instrument of the Syrian government. Seale clearly knows a lot about Asad's Syria; but his purpose is to exonerate the Syrian president.

And, as if more urgency and more drama were necessary, there is the matter of the recent destruction of Pan Am 103 over Scotland. The investigation has apparently linked the bombing to Ahmed Jibril's Palestinian organization, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command. It is largely based in, and tied to, Syria. Asad himself offered an awkward explanation of this link (in an interview with *Time*). But he failed to learn from his biographer, who suggests that the bombing of 103 was a diabolical scheme by the Mossad to prepare the ground for Yitzhak Shamir's negotiations with Yasir Arafat.

Did Asad really "leave his minority complexes behind him"? This is hardly credible, if we consider the skillful way in which he has relied on the Alawi community in the construction of his regime. Was Asad an innocent, somewhat clumsy officer catapulted into the deep waters of Syrian politics by the 1967 war? Hardly, if we remember the fact that in February 1966 he chose to become acting minister of defense and not minister of defense; this provided him with a technical justification for holding on to his command of the air force. He already possessed that sort of cunning, in other words, and did not have to wait another 14 months for a rude awakening.

What about the notion that Asad was cruelly outwitted by a series of evil foes? There is certainly much that can be said against the policies of successive Israeli governments, of Henry Kissinger, of Anwar Sadat, and there is certainly little that can be said for the radical Islamic opposition in Syria, but Seale's theories cannot be sustained. Asad was part of a group that pushed Syria and the region into the 1967 war, and he took part with Sadat in preparing the 1973 war; there was a great deal of adventurism in both instances. No doubt Asad learned that one can launch a military operation or a full-scale war but have no control over the course it takes. Seale, moreover, neglects to mention Asad's own deception. It appears that he arranged with the Soviets to propose a cease-fire 48 hours after the war began; his whole concept of the war must have been based on that assumption. But when the Soviets approached the Egyptians with the idea for an early cease-fire, they were rebuffed, and the Syrians, in turn, told the Egyptians that it was the Soviets' own idea, of which they had been equally unaware.

Did a cunning and somewhat dishonest Kissinger repeatedly mislead an innocent Asad? Again, hardly. Kissinger was a manipulative negotiator who never shared his full plan with any of his many partners. In Asad, he found a fascinating interlocutor and adversary. Both understood where their countries' interests overlapped and where they diverged. Each tried to use the other. Still, even if we accept that Kissinger misled Asad in 1974, and then again in 1975, why should we believe that Asad fell into the trap again, when he was pulled into the Lebanese quagmire in 1976? He is not a naive man. By 1976, certainly, he was quite experienced.

Finally, there is no reason to concur with Seale that a year later Asad was let down by a well-intentioned but powerless Jimmy Carter. The truth is that Asad was at least as effective as Begin in obstructing Carter's original plan of a comprehensive Arab-Israeli settlement, in diverting him (unwittingly, in Asad's case) to an endorsement of a separate Israeli-Egyptian deal. Carter, who remains oddly fond of Asad, wrote in his memoirs that "this was the man who would soon sabotage the Geneva peace talks."

Asad, then, is an apologetic book, and not always reliable. But it is a sophisticated book, and there are things to be learned from Seale's information: about Asad's mistrust of Arafat and the PLO, for example, and about his complex attitude toward the Soviet Union and his craving for recognition by Washington. Seale's description of Asad's regional aim is interesting. Asad wants to dominate his Arab environment, says Seale, not for the sake of the traditional ideal of Greater Syria, but more generally to dominate the Levant. It is also clear from Seale's account that Asad desires to deal with Israel from a position of strength: he rejected the Sinai II agreement, we are told, because it "would have meant Syria's declining into just another weak state on Israel's borders, into another Jordan perhaps, living on sufferance, projecting no power. . . ." As for the Palestinians, "In Asad's scheme of things the Palestine problem was too important to be left to the Palestinians." These are all useful observations for anyone wishing to address Asad's outlook on the current attempts to resolve the conflict.

Since the appearance of Seale's book, its hero has once again recaptured the limelight. Asad has been busy inflicting an unusually grim punishment on Beirut's Christian neighborhoods. Gen. Michel 'Awn, the Maronite commander of Lebanon's army and the head of one of its two governments, had challenged Asad rather blatantly by calling for Syria's expulsion from Lebanon. Whether 'Awn was moved by a misreading of his own power, or by a foolish reliance on Iraqi promises to Syria's enemies in Lebanon, is not clear. But Asad's response was characteristically swift and brutal. In the *Washington Post*, Asad's biographer commented on Asad's response to 'Awn's (and Arafat's) defiance. Seale the journalist was more explicit than Seale the biographer, but the message was the same: "[I]f there is a lesson to be learned from recent history, it is that attempts to finesse Mr. Asad or otherwise ignore Syrian interests lead to violence rather than to peace. When driven to the wall, his instinct is to fight, even to fight dirty."

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Semper Fidel

BY MARK FALCOFF

To Make a World Safe for Revolution: Cuba's Foreign Policy by Jorge I. Domínguez

(Harvard University Press, 384 pp., $35)

Nostromo was written more than a half century before the Cuban revolution, but one cannot help feeling that Fidel Castro could have taught Conrad nothing new about politics in the Spanish tropics. Or almost nothing new. After a civil war, General Montero is left in control of all but one of his country's provinces. The one lost by partition, however, contains the country's only asset—a silver mine. He is thus left to govern his backward domain without foreign assistance or foreign connec-

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tions. Castro drove out most of what was worth owning or having in Cuba before 1959, including its most important human capital. But Castro at least has found a new ally and a new place for his country in the world order. Though he has been left with a truncated version of what he set out to conquer, he is still worth something to somebody. Fidelismo is Monterismo with a difference.

"A small country with a big country's foreign policy"—that is how Jorge Domínguez describes Cuba's new international role. Though himself an émigré (he came to this country when he was 14 years old and now teaches in the government department at Harvard), he cannot completely suppress a frisson of pride and satisfaction. In some ways, this is entirely understandable: it is the revenge of at least five generations of Cubans, whose greatest frustration was having been born in a small country right next door to the United States—a proximity even more troubling spiritually and culturally than geopolitically.

For Cubans, the United States was too close to be ignored, but too far away to be successfully replicated. To be a Cuban used to mean to be colorful, picturesque, sexy, romantic, poor—anything but important; and to know it. Today it means to be tough, mean, an armed and dangerous customer, a citizen of the one Latin American country the gringos don't push around. For most Americans, the spectacle is vaguely distasteful; for a few, it is frankly thrilling. Domínguez valiantly tries, not always with success, to tread the line between the two reactions.

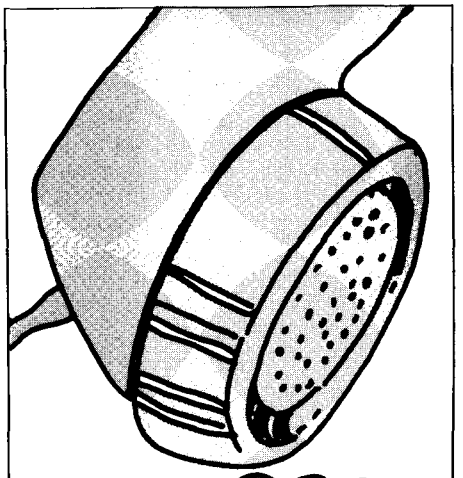
Small countries tend to remember history especially well, since it often turns out badly for them. Cuba was a latecomer to Latin American independence, held in check by the fear that any slackening of colonial authority would unleash a huge underclass of African slaves (as occurred in neighboring Haiti), as well as by the presence in Havana of a large Spanish naval and military establishment. Advocates of independence had to bide their time well into the second half of the 19th century, when the tide turned—first, thanks to Spain's emancipation of the slaves after the American Civil War; then to a drawdown of colonial forces by the impoverished metropolis; and finally, to the bankrupting of the local planter class and the absorption of much of their assets by new American sugar companies.

The social basis of Spanish colonialism had long disappeared by 1898, but Spanish rule was not easily dislodged, even in its final agonies. The second war of independence (1895-98) was extremely costly; successive scorched-earth campaigns destroyed much of the country's agricultural resources, and it took the life of José Martí, the great apostle of Cuban nationalism. When the United States declared war on Spain (ostensibly for blowing up the battleship USS *Maine* in the Havana harbor), the ragtag army of Cuban patriots was by no means poised on the cusp of victory. They protested, after the smoke cleared and the new American military authorities were in place, that Washington had intervened to seize their rightful prize from them. This nationalist grudge, based on myth and wishful thinking, was kept alive by the fact that—whatever Washington's motives—by intervening in the Cuban-Spanish war, it had decisively altered the shape of the island's future. The new Cuban republic, established after the withdrawal of U.S. troops in 1901, was at any rate something different from what generations of Cuban patriots had hoped for.

Between 1901 and 1934, it was common for Europeans to refer to Cuba as an American protectorate, since it enjoyed limited sovereignty under special arrangements subsumed under the Platt Amendment to an Army appropriations bill. Basically, this gave the United States the right to intervene in Cuban affairs, including the dispatch of troops and the temporary establishment of trusteeship authorities, whenever "life, liberty, and property" were endangered. The provision was actually exercised only once, for a three-year period (1906-09), though to hear Cubans of the day tell it, bilateral relations were one long cavalry of rape and pillage by the U.S. Marines. (They even accused Judge Charles Magoon, the U.S. governor at the time, of having introduced corruption into Cuban politics.)

In truth, if the protection of life, liberty, and property had been the controlling consideration of American policy, the United States would have occupied Cuba all the time, not merely for three years. And an even darker and less convenient fact is that in every Cuban election after 1901, the loser claimed fraud and connived to provoke American military intervention to overturn the result. This charade ended when the United States unilaterally abrogated the Platt Amendment in 1934. In that year Washington began to concern itself less with the substance of Cuban politics, and more with such mundane matters as commerce, consular affairs, and tourism.

The abrogation of the Platt Amendment forced Cubans to take notice of what had actually been the central characteristic of the American-Cuban relationship all along: the special commercial link under which Cuban sugar—by



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any standard the island's most important export—entered the United States. Thanks to a special reciprocity treaty also concluded in 1934, roughly a quarter of the American market was reserved for Cuban imports. This was no small matter, since from about 1920 on, sugar was becoming what it has since remained, something of a drug on the international market. The island's place in the world economy was threatened not only by Europeans, who were turning increasingly to home production of sugar from beets, but also by American farmers, and by planters in Hawaii and the Philippines (which was then a U.S. territory).

Secretary of State Cordell Hull's decision to reserve a place for Cuba in the American market, at a time when so many other countries were freezing it out, was not a disinterested one; most of the major producers on the island were American corporations. Even in those years they were well represented in Washington by a sophisticated phalanx of lawyer-lobbyists, before Congress and the departments of Commerce and Agriculture. But the sugar policy dovetailed nicely with Washington's concern for stability on the island and good relations with Latin America, and generally with other parts of Roosevelt's foreign policy agenda.

More to the point—a crucial point, which later generations of Cuban nationalists missed—the island's place in the American market continued to be guaranteed well into the 1940s and 1950s, even though the industry was increasingly coming under local ownership. By the time Castro was a student at the University of Havana in the mid-1940s, the nationalist critique of the arrangement had shifted from the alleged corporate greed of United Fruit et al. to the notion that the American companies were part of a vast conspiracy by the United States to prevent Cuba from becoming an advanced industrial nation. Castro's first minister of industries, Che Guevara, though himself a down-at-the-heels Argentine aristocrat, voiced genuine Cuban feelings when he called the U.S. sugar quota a "yoke of imperialism." (This did not prevent him, however, from protesting its abolition by the Eisenhower administration in late 1960 as "economic aggression.")

Since World War II, no country has wanted to be a monoculture, and Cuba was no exception. But the record shows that the island did not do so badly, by the standards of the day, in export-led agricultural growth. By the early 1950s it was beginning to expand into seasonal vegetables, and was also making some tentative starts in light industry. The standard of living in Cuban cities equaled that of Western European countries, and the country's overall indices of development were among the highest in Latin America.

The downside—not a small one—was that the gap between the approximately three-and-a-half million Cubans who lived in cites and their some three million rural cousins was vast and abysmal. Cuba was really two countries. Its prerevolutionary political class must forever stand condemned for its failure to correct these massive inequalities. But Castro has simply abolished the one country without markedly improving the welfare of the other. In 1959 Cuba ranked second or third among Latin American countries in economic and social development. Today it languishes somewhere in the higher teens.

All of this is decidedly pertinent to an understanding of Cuba's foreign policy. The kind of role a country (particularly a small country) decides to play in the world will determine in a large measure the kind of society it has at home. This is the point that Domínguez seems to grasp not at all in an otherwise remarkably comprehensive survey of a complex and difficult subject. Without doubt, Cuba is a more important political actor on the world stage than it was before Castro ruled it; but the difference is felt mainly at the level of its leadership class, by the people with whom the author of this book has obviously spent a great deal of time. One cannot help wondering how meaningful the transformation has been to the average Cuban.

In one crucial way, ironically, nothing has changed at all since 1959. After early attempts at leapfrogging to industrialization (a kind of local version of Mao's "Great Leap Forward"), the island has settled down to doing what it has always done best: producing sugar. (Domínguez's figures show, in fact, that Cuba is slightly more dependent on this product now than it was before the revolution.) In place of the American sugar quota, it relies on rigid, prearranged markets with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. At times these markets have locked the Cubans into disadvantageous arrangements when the price of their major export unexpectedly shot up. To be sure, the Soviets in recent years have paid a premium for the Cuban product, sometimes as high as four times the world price. But unlike its earlier relationship with the United States, much of Cuba's trade with the Soviet Union is conducted by barter, so that Castro is less able to select his trading partners, or to open projects to competitive bidding from different sources.

Moreover, there is a qualitative difference that is crucial. "The nature, but not the fact of Cuba's vulnerability to the international economy has changed," Domínguez points out. "If capitalism generates dependency or interdependency through the market, socialism generates dependency through power and ideology." This leaves Castro at the mercy of potential shifts in Soviet foreign policy—potentially as great a peril to him as European agricultural protectionism was to his predecessors in the 1920s. Small wonder that Gorbachev is viewed, in official circles in Havana, as almost as great a threat as Reagan ever was.

In many other ways, of course, Cuba is a vastly different country than it was before Castro came to power. The most important difference—on which Domínguez rightfully dwells at considerable length—is that it now possesses the largest army in Latin America after Brazil, a country many times its size and population. Moreover, that army is deployed all over the world. There are some 250,000 Cubans overseas, mostly in Africa. This is, proportionately, a larger overseas commitment than the United States made at the height of the Vietnam War.

A military burden of this sort presupposes an entirely different set of national priorities, and it is fraught with weighty implications for the domestic political order. More guns means less butter; people cannot eat international prestige (as it is measured by votes at the United Nations). When a regime must ration everything from food and clothing to toothpaste and toilet paper, it requires, obviously, a comprehensive system of political repression.

In comparing the two Cubas, what one finds is essentially the same island producing the same product, less efficiently and to an entirely different end. The logic of the prerevolutionary order was to use the international economic system to maximize local gain (however unequally the rewards were distributed at home). Castro's Cuba has turned the system around. Now foreign policy is not an extension of domestic affairs. Foreign policy is, rather, the name of the game: everything at home is organized to support the projection of power abroad. In fact, economics is a matter of wholly secondary interest to the regime. As Domínguez puts it crisply, "When a choice must be made, Cuba [that is, Castro and his associates] consistently chooses politics over prosperity."

Castro's Cuba also has a different way of looking at the world than normal, "bourgeois" states do. It is a quintessentially anti-status-quo power, much as the

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Soviet Union was in the 1920s. This does not prevent it from acting like a normal state, however, when the situation is deemed to require it. Cuban foreign relations are replete with such delicious anomalies as close relations with Franco's Spain, and with Argentina under the military junta from 1976 to 1982 (though not with Pinochet's Chile, which is anti-Soviet). But unlike the Soviet Union, Cuba cannot easily *become* an ordinary state. It is not, after all, a huge continental landmass with vast natural resources, or an advanced military technology, or strong cultural ties to neighboring countries, heir to a huge historic empire.

Instead, Cuba has become, rather oddly like the United States, a "proposition country." Its political regime is its national identity. Without the revolution there is no reason for Cuba's international role; and without its international role as a revolutionary state there is no rationale, no explanation for the regime itself, or for the costs that it continues to exact from its people. In the early days Castro could promise "a standard of living as high or higher than Sweden's." Today one call for belt-tightening, austerity, and sacrifice is followed by another, and yet another, and yet another.

The country lives in a mentality of permanent siege, not merely because it has enemies—or rather, one enemy, immediately to the north—but because it needs enemies. If Soviet communism cannot provide the proper ideological rationale, then another one will have to be found. Castro himself revealed as much recently in an unexpected late-night visit to the Japanese Embassy in Havana, where he congratulated his hosts on "outstripping the United States" economically, and in a leap of ideological pluralism remarkable even for him, paid tribute to the Japanese kamikaze pilots in World War II.

The relationship with the United States—or the anti-relationship—is obviously the organizing principle of Cuban foreign policy, to an obsessive degree. Castro is more motivated by what he is against than by what he is for. This explains, among other things, some of the odd partners he chooses in world affairs, or his abrupt changes of side—as in the case of Ogaden in the Ethiopian civil war in the late 1970s. Even though it cost him the presidency of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Cuban dictator felt obligated to endorse the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. "We are not going to be on the side of the United States," he declared. "Simply that." Can a nation subsist on anti-Americanism alone? Castro's Cuba seems determined to test the proposition to the limits of its most grotesque possibilities.

Domínguez gives this aspect of Cuban foreign policy its proper place in his analysis. He goes out of his way, for example, to demonstrate that Castro was not pushed into the arms of the Soviet Union by an unfeeling or uncomprehending United States. "It is clearly not true that Cuba turned toward Marxism-Leninism or the Soviet Union because the United States refused to provide economic aid," Domínguez writes, "or that aid was offered on terms that were clearly unacceptable. The United States was almost pushing aid on Cuba; the terms were never discussed, because Cuban officials prevented it." In other words, Castro proceeded thus because he had a different role in mind for his country. As Domínguez puts it piquantly, one morning Cubans woke up to confront an enemy they did not know they had.

But he seems not always to understand what this decision of Castro's meant in terms of concrete policy for the future. He suggests the trade embargo, now nearly 30 years old,

> may have an effect that is the opposite of what the United States government intends. What the Cuban government manages best is U.S. economic hostility; what it manages least well are episodes of prosperity and active engagement in the world market. It is the specter of wealth, not scarcity, that haunts the Cuban revolution.

This is true as far as it goes, but it suggests that Cuba's creditworthiness is (or could be) unrelated to its economic performance. As a matter of fact, in the 1970s Cuba exhausted its potential with Western European trading partners, and after running up several billion dollars' worth of debts it had to declare a unilateral moratorium on servicing these obligations in 1983. Cuba's problem is not the mismanagement of prosperity, but its inability to function as a rational member of the world capitalist system. And that situation is dictated by its own domestic and international priorities. Those priorities mean that even if the United States wished to subsidize Castro much as the Soviets, Eastern Europeans, and (at times) Western Europeans and Japanese have chosen to do, and even if American banks added Cuba to their list of "non-performing" countries whose obligations the American taxpayer would eventually be called upon to assume, it would not change Cuba's international role, because that is dictated by other considerations. For Cuba, Domínguez concludes:

> The major long-standing issue has been its wish to be treated as a sovereign country on a par with the United States. For the United States, such a recognition of Cuba would not cost much objectively, but it would be difficult politically. Having weathered the administrations of seven American presidents, the Cuban government is in no hurry to compromise in matters it deems significant. . . . In Cuba's view, the United States should accept that it has lost the "war" of 30 years and accept Cuba's rightful place among nations.

But what *is* "Cuba's rightful place among nations"? Sovereignty is a relative term, even for superpowers. It is sad to be small and poor when one wishes to be rich and powerful, but wishing will not change things. By choosing the particular economic and political model it did, Cuba may have diminished rather than enhanced whatever sovereignty it retained under the old arrangements. Its only consolation is its "influence," that is, the appreciation and the solidarity of the corrupt political classes that oppress most of the peoples of the Third World, particularly the kleptocracies we courteously refer to as African governments.

Admittedly, the United State has not been willing to treat as a normal political phenomenon a close neighbor whose foreign policy is organized around the principle of hostility to America's goals, interests, and values—and which chooses to define sovereignty only in the most negative sense. Why should it? Nor does it choose to treat Cuba with the kind of circumspection due another great power. Why should it? Castro is a kind of poltergeist of old-fashioned Cuban nationalism, struggling on behalf of a political vision that is collapsing from within. It is not pleasant to watch a small nation slowly destroy itself, but it would be ridiculous to reward it for, or encourage it on, its destructive course.

The revolution for which Cuba would make the world safe is the revolution of vainglory, which is premised on planned scarcity and repression. This revolution has already made considerable headway in Nicaragua. It may yet prevail in Angola. It still threatens El Salvador. For all of the awe with which he approaches his subject, Domínguez's exhaustive research demonstrates that Cuba's lurch toward a major world role has produced a surprisingly banal result: a kind of club of failure to which no people, given the chance, would seek membership. It is a surprising outcome for a nation whose history once seemed to promise so much.

MARK FALCOFF is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. His latest book, *Modern Chile, 1970-1989: A Critical History*, has just been published by Transaction.

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BOSTON DIARIST

Nothing Has Been Proved

IF THEY GAVE PULITZER PRIZES for newspaper headlines (and they should), then someone at the *New York Times* op-ed page surely would have gotten one by now. The latest stroke of genius, "ANARCHY IN THE STREETS: AN OCCASIONAL SERIES," is the new logo for articles dealing with drugs, guns, people born after 1970, and other threats to property values. In one deftly turned phrase, it captures all the absurdly random brutality foreigners intuitively identify with the United States. One minute you're meditating on the complexities of the European Community election results, the next (in the words of the man who saw his airplane steward sucked out of a hole near the luggage compartment) "whoosh, you're gone." I've only once been the object of occasional anarchy: as I was walking along a road in D.C. last year, about seven "youths" rushed me. One of them kneed me in the groin, and then they hurled me into an alleyway. They took no money, and one of them even apologized, although he didn't help me up. These days, my exposure to "the whoosh factor" is restricted to reading my local newspaper, Boston's *South End News*. It prints a weekly crime report written by John Sacco, the Police Department's Community Service Officer, whose main community service—apart from recounting what happened last week in the neighborhood—is a near-perfect mastery of the literary style unique to police officers. Here's what a genuine Boston Diarist à la Sacco would read like.

TO BEGIN WITH, THE DEADPAN narrative is crucial: "On May 23, at about 11:50 p.m. a 28-year-old Aguadilla St., man had a little too much to drink. He walked into his apartment and kicked his sister in the eye. At this time his mother tried to pull him away and he bit her on the finger, causing it to bleed." The mix of understatement and overelaboration is impeccable, a kind of literary combination of an airplane announcer and Stephen King. Thus, "at about 8 p.m., a 40-year-old Milford St., man called police after a Bond St., female threatened to perform a castration on him. This occurred after a neighborhood argument. The female was going to have her husband perform the surgery when he came home." And then there's the postmodern absence of authorial involvement: "At this time, a footchase ensued . . ." (In *style indirect policier*, footchases always "ensue" and autos are invariably "operated.") And there's the occasional lapse into magical realism: "At about 7:30 a.m. a 43-year-old homeless man was walking along when he was approached by three males who knocked him to the ground. One man held his arms, the other held his legs . . . . Finding no money, the third man bit the victim on the nose." Throughout it all, Officer Sacco keeps his cool, scrupulously avoiding the apportionment of blame, never jumping to conclusions not strictly warranted by the facts. "At about 4:30 a.m., Officers Murphy and Butler observed three males who fled in all directions when spotted by the officers. A 21-year-old Mattapan man tossed away two plastic bags of a green herb. $941 in cash, and more bags of green herb were found on the man." I guess in gentrifying Boston these days, the market for tarragon is getting hotter by the minute.

I WAS ONE OF THOSE FOOLS DURing last fall's election who was prepared to give Lee Atwater the benefit of the doubt. In the end, I judged Atwater mean and crude, but not completely beyond the pale. I take it back, and it's not just the sight of him with his pants down in the latest *Esquire*. What gets me about the Tom Foley affair is that Atwater really cannot lose: as he put it in a typically shameless defense of his early refusal to disown the now infamous RNC memo, "Tom Foley's the big loser when the whole thing gets aired." Atwater can always apologize, as he did, and as he will do again. But so what? Even those who defend Foley find themselves unwittingly acquiescing in Atwater's strategy: to accept the premise that homosexuality is shameful, disgusting, or to be condemned, rather than accepted as a fact of life. Bob Dole argued that to insinuate that Foley was gay was to "tarnish [his] reputation." Representative James Leach called it "character-poisoning." The game's already lost. The privacy debate is not what's at issue: what matters is whether it's OK to unleash sentiments of malice so that all reason is shouted down and any defense only increases the offense. It was the same last fall: "un-Americanism" is a tough slur to rebut without accepting the premise that such a thing exists. The tactic isn't particularly clever, but it works. That's the problem. Conservatism has always trodden a line between respect for what Burke called "prejudice" and a sober, cold fear of its untrammeled possibilities. When conservatism loses the fear and fans the hate, it becomes almost indistinguishable from petty fascism. I think that's a pretty good description of what Atwater seems to believe in and what Bush, by continued association, now endorses.

HERE IN POLITICALLY CORRECT land—yes, I'm in graduate school—there's a new dictum for discourse in the third person singular. It's called the she rule. No, I don't mean what John Mortimer's Rumpole described as She Who Must Be Obeyed (his wife), or even the pronoun the British now invoke to describe She Who Is Invariably Re-elected. This particular she refers to any unidentified third person who might otherwise be he. *Viz*: "Insofar as an ironist philosophizes about her situation, she does not think her vocabulary is closer to reality than others," etc. For those who manage to squeeze a reference to Derrida into making dinner reservations, it—or rather she—is a must. The worse thing is, she sticks. I can no longer write him in good conscience, but still can't get used to her cropping up when I least expect her, and most miss him. All very distracting. The principle is annoyingly clear, but the practice—as ever—seems silly. Trouble is, I can't think of an alternative. She's better than he/she, in principle beats him, and grammatically outclasses them; and it sucks. Any suggestions?

"FLOGGING UNDERWEAR" UPdate: since last year's TNR story exposing the insidious influence of Calvin Klein underwear ads on Western civilization, the boxer wars have only intensified. No, I don't mean the new Obsession ad (which does for tasteful depictions of the male abdomen what Rob Lowe has done for home movies). Nor the ubiquitous Greg Louganis modeling Speedos in *Vanity Fair*. Nor even the new Madonna S&M video, with the not overly subtle title "Express Yourself." Hermès' latest fashion catalog has what I take to be a new level of floggingism. It's called "Carnet D'élégance," and its copy reads like someone French trying to write English: "Hermès, Outfitters . . . sheer audacity! Yet with what steadfast belief we are including that profession under our name!" *Mais oui*, and with what, how you say, style do we do the rip-off of the customers. A "variation on the theme of the boxer short" is yours for only $450. But, then, there is a place for everything. Hermès men, you see, are particularly "demanding because they have a culture." Ah, now I get it. Anyone for anarchy? Strictly occasional, you understand.

ANDREW SULLIVAN

ANDREW SULLIVAN, a former TNR associate editor, lives in Boston's South End.

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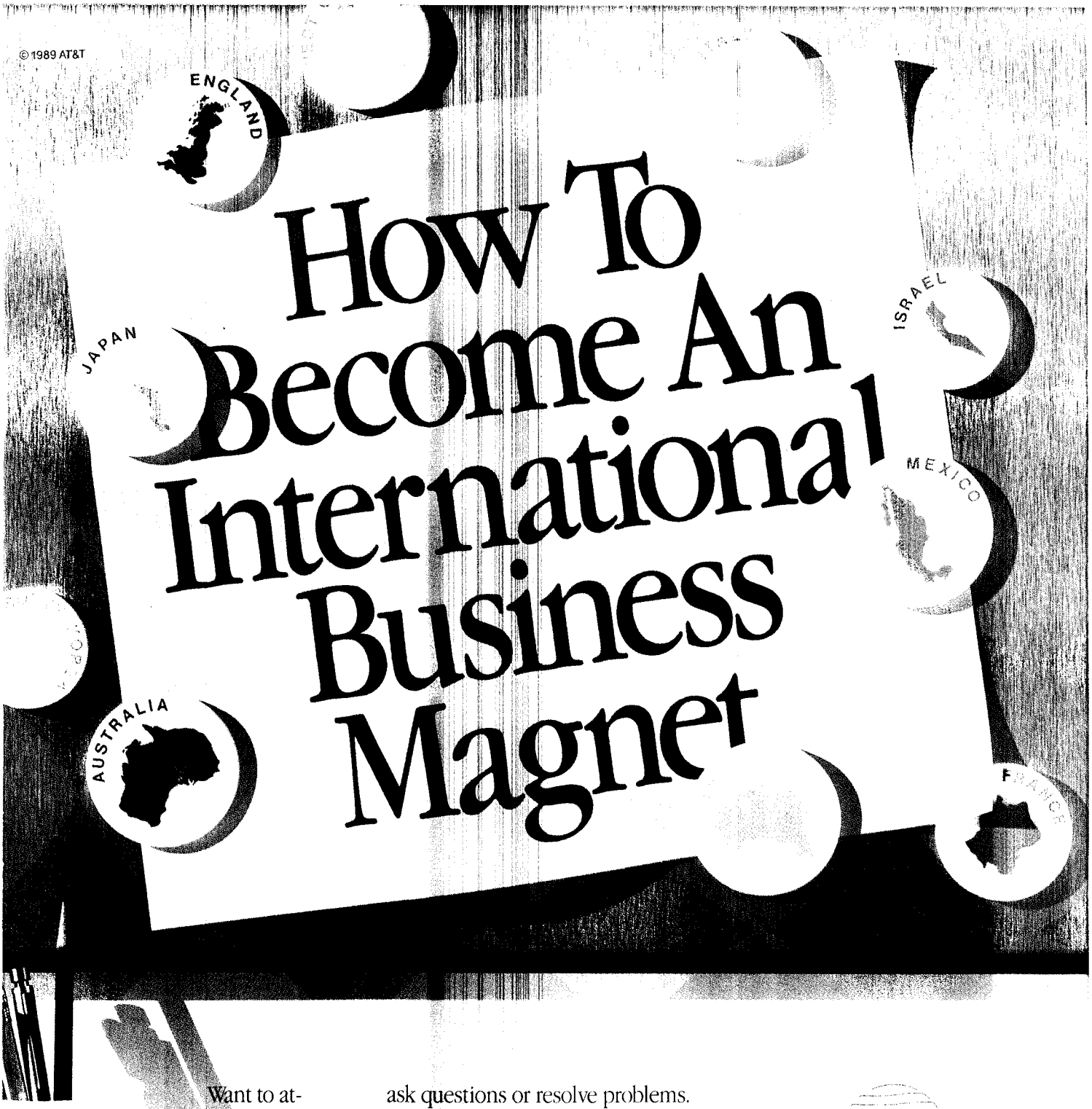

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